90th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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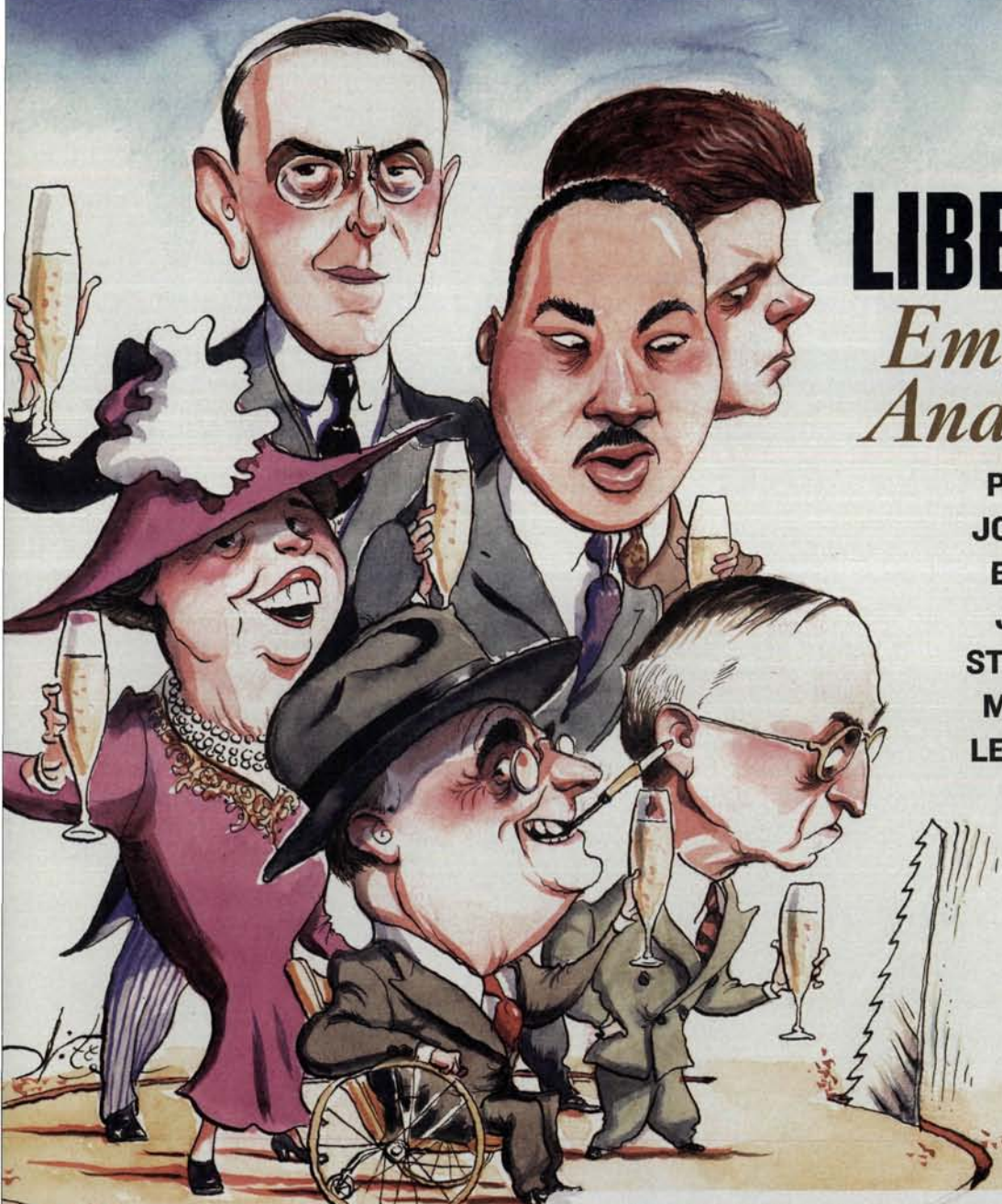

TO LIBERALISM!

Embattled... And Essential

PETER BEINART
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STEPHEN HOLMES
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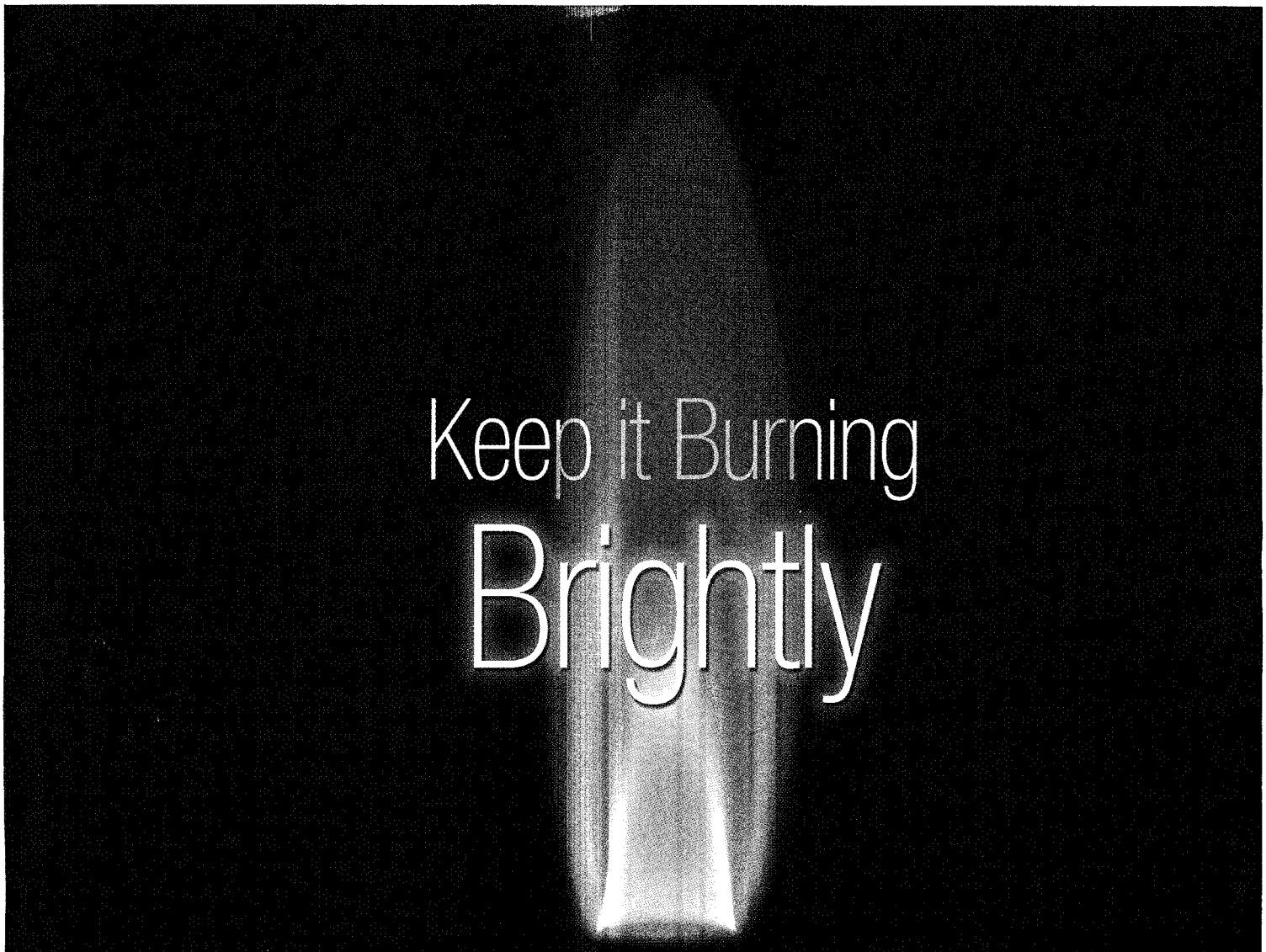

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
Updated daily. On the Web at www.tnr.com.

THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

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CORRESPONDENCE

A HOUSE DIVIDED

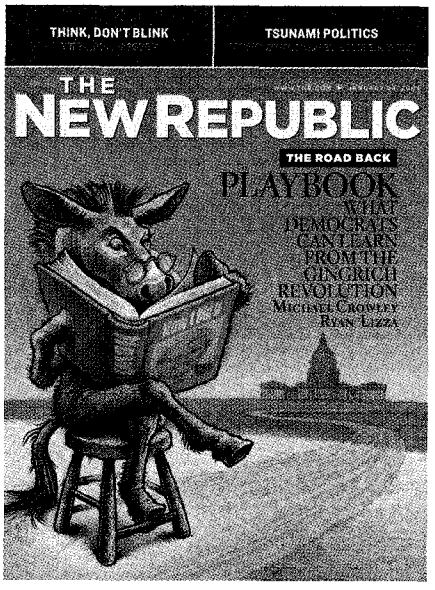
MICHAEL CROWLEY'S ARTICLE MADE passing reference to what he called a "galling" episode as evidence of ethical breaches in the House of Representatives ("Learning from Newt," January 24). The "galling" episode was my effort to crack down on the illegal sale of contraband cigarettes to fund terrorist activities. National news accounts have documented this disturbing source of funds for some of the most dangerous terrorist organizations. My plan would have helped the United States thwart terrorists who engage in cigarette trafficking and sales to finance their operations. No one in the House leadership disagreed with the purpose of this important homeland security provision; yet Crowley allowed a factually inaccurate article in *The Washington Post* to guide his reporting. In fact, if he had done his own research, he would have also discovered that the bill in question was the homeland security bill—not the budget, as he reports. Ironically, the *Post* later used the same space on its front page to quote an Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives official calling the illicit sale of contraband cigarettes "a major priority," saying, "The deeper we dig into these cases, the more ties to terrorism we're discovering."

ROY BLUNT
U.S. Representative
Washington, D.C.

IN ADVISING THE HOUSE DEMOCRATS TO "burn down the House in order to save it," Crowley ignores a crucial part of why Newt Gingrich could attack the institution so savagely. Gingrich was attacking not only the House, but the federal government itself. For the Republicans of 1994, the corruption in the House was only a symptom of a bloated, tyrannical government that needed to be reined in. By lowering trust in the federal government as a whole, the Republicans succeeded in building support for their programmatic agenda. It is impossible to disconnect Gingrich's attack on the House from his anti-government crusade. If House Democrats were to lower public trust in the House, they would find it even more difficult to make their case for a strong role for the federal government in people's lives. Crowley is correct that House Democrats need to start making attacks on unethical conduct, but they should make it clear that it is not the House that is the problem, but rather the other side of the aisle.

BRENDAN DUKE
Alameda, California

MICHAEL CROWLEY RESPONDS:
Representative Roy Blunt is correct that it was the homeland security bill and not the budget to which he attempted to make his last-minute addition. I regret the error, but it has little bearing on the key point: What matters is Blunt's effort to circumvent the legislative norms of the House. His provision—which had nothing to do with the bill's creation of the Homeland Security Department—had never been debated in the House, either on the floor or in committee. Yet he tried to add this rider mere hours before his colleagues voted on the intricate 475-page bill, virtually guaranteeing they would never see it. Blunt is correct that illegal cigarette sales are a source of income for terrorists. But it is also the case that such sales, most of which are surely not terrorism-related, eat into the profits of tobacco companies like Phillip Morris, which employs both his son and then-girlfriend (and now wife) as lobbyists. If this provision was so plainly virtuous, why didn't Blunt introduce it weeks earlier for a transparent debate? That way people could have satisfied themselves that Blunt was really acting in the national interest and not carrying water for an industry that has supported him over the years—or doing a favor for his loved ones. It seems elementary that members of Congress should debate—or, at the very least, have enough time to read—legislation before voting on it, and yet Blunt offers no apologies for his attempt at covert lawmaking. "Take my word for



it" is a pretty thin defense. That a senior Republican like Blunt would adopt such a line speaks volumes about how today's House of Representatives operates.

NO GOOD DOCTOR

MICHELLE COTTLE IS RIGHT ABOUT DR. Phil ("Daddy Knows," December 27, 2004). But there is a more important issue that makes Phil McGraw a bad doctor. He has no therapeutic alliance with his "patients." There is no agreement between him and them that they have a part both in understanding their difficulties and in addressing the solutions. Good treatment requires three things of the therapist: genuineness, accurate empathy, and non-possessive warmth. Dr. Phil, who says he lacks "patience for [his] patients," has none of these. He is not genuine because he is an actor for the camera and his audience, not a therapist for his victims. He cannot know empathy because he pretends all issues are completely conscious and within the immedi-

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THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 232, Number 7, Issue 4,702, February 28, 2005. (Printed in the United States on February 17, 2005.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 28 & April 4, May 2 & 9, June 6 & 13, July 11 & 18, August 22 & 29, November 28 & December 5, and December 26, 2005 through January 9, 2006) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Grant Loomis at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 465-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $6.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2005 by The New Republic, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call **(800) 827-1289** or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com. Ride-along enclosed, version I-1 only.

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ate grasp of anyone who is not an idiot or a mendacious rebel. He knows no one who suffers. Bad things happen on network TV programs. Let us not confuse such mockery with treatment.

ROBERT O. BEGTRUP
Emeritus Medical Director
The Psychiatric Hospital at Vanderbilt
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MICHELLE COTTLE'S ATTACK ON DR. Phil illustrates a part of the difficulty liberals are having with the mainstream. Admittedly, I would prefer the more low-key, deliberative treatment of dysfunctional families I might expect to see on, say, "Frontline." Unfortunately, most Americans don't watch "Frontline." While much of what happens on his show may be reminiscent of "Queen for a Day," Phil McGraw is the only celebrity pundit who confronts self-defeating behavior, and he does more than tell his subjects to get their acts together. He empathetically acknowledges the pain that makes this difficult. He will tell a problematic teenager that his behavior is unacceptable, but he will also note how he has been treated abysmally. It is not either-or. Although he disavows psychoanalysis, McGraw attends, like an analyst, to the unconscious feelings that are masked by self-defeating postures. This is somewhat contrary to a media culture that promotes obsessive self-indulgence, material excess, one-upmanship, vengeance, and manipulation as a way of navigating the social world.

Cottle's comparison to the president indicates she does not get it. Bush is not interested in complexities below the surface. "Dr. Phil" is not therapy, but McGraw does introduce the notion of self-reflection. He is part of the commercial culture, but why deride him rather than the hoards who shamelessly propagate the most pernicious values of that culture? Also, the cover line, "Dr. Evil," is over the top. Not even the most derisive parts of the article begin to justify it. Talk about crass commercial sensationalism!

THOMAS WAGNER
New York, New York

DOUBLE TROUBLE

AS SOMEONE WHO APPLAUDS ANNE Applebaum's work on the other European holocaust, which the journalistic left has generally downplayed, I feel impelled to dispute her statements about German historian Ernst Nolte ("How Evil Works" December 27, 2004). With due respect to Applebaum, Nolte's "outburst" about Soviet crimes leading to Nazi genocide did not have a "terrible silencing effect" on German historians who might otherwise have discussed the similarities between the two tyrannies. Nor is it true that "most historians who did not want to minimize the significance of the Holocaust tended afterward to shy away from the comparison altogether."

First of all, Nolte does not do what Applebaum suggests—alluding to a newspaper article—namely, defend the Holocaust as a justified response to a disproportionate Jewish involvement in European communist revolutions and the Soviet dictatorship. Rather, Nolte sets out to describe the mentality of those Europeans who joined anti-Semitic movements in the interwar period. In *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg, 1917–1945*, he painstakingly analyzes the "rationality" of those who connected Jews and communists in explaining the rise of anti-communist anti-Semitism in the epoch that gave birth to National Socialism. Supposedly, by expelling or destroying European Jewry, one would be getting rid of the perpetrators of Soviet mass murder. Although there is much to fault in Nolte's method, the view ascribed to him comes from his "anti-fascist" critics, starting with Jurgen Habermas and Wolfgang Mommsen. Their view is that genocidal anti-Semitism arose from the general course of German history and that Nolte is diverting attention from that legacy by calling attention to the effect of Soviet crimes.

These critics did not reject the "comparison" between Stalinist and Hitlerian tyrannies because of their embarrassment over Nolte. Since the 1960s, the German left has gone after anti-communism as a reactionary force together with any theory of "totalitarianism" that compares Soviet and Nazi crimes. A study by German political scientist Steffen Kailitz, dealing with the ideological components of German culture, underlines how deeply anti-anti-communism shaped reactions to Nolte's "outburst." It is therefore hard to believe that what should be a self-evident comparison would have prevailed among German intellectuals if not for Nolte's revisionism.

PAUL GOTTFRIED
Horace Raffensperger Professor of Humanities
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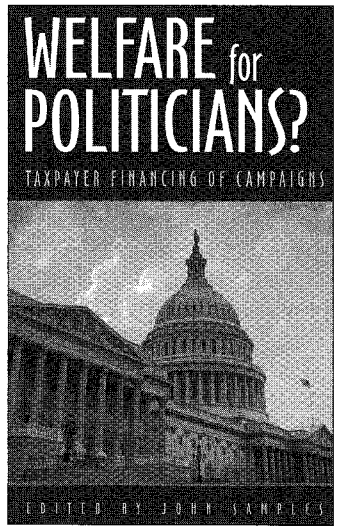
How Not to Reform Campaign Finance Laws



American taxpayers have contributed some $2 billion since 1976 to subsidize primary and general election campaigns for the presidency. In this book, a dozen experts consider the effects of full public funding in various states, the merits of free television time for candidates, and the problems and prospects of the presidential public financing program. Among the contributors are Patrick Basham, Thomas Finneran, Michael Malbin, and Chip Mellor. *Welfare for Politicians* is mandatory reading for those both for and against public financing.

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More Than Words

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

Is George W. Bush the new champion of the liberal foreign policy tradition? Ever since the president's lofty second inaugural, in which he pledged the United States to promote freedom across the globe, conservatives have been emphatically saying "yes"—comparing him to such liberal giants as Woodrow Wilson, Harry S Truman, and John F. Kennedy. Liberals have been saying "yes, but"—acknowledging the moral power of Bush's words, but claiming that his policies contradict them.

In policy terms, I think the liberal critics are largely right: Bush's actions don't match his words. From Russia to Uzbekistan to Equatorial Guinea, the United States has actually drawn closer to a whole series of tyrannies since September 11. And our efforts to promote liberal civil society in the Muslim world—by funding secular education, for instance—have been pathetically meager.

But liberals are losing the argument nonetheless, because Bush's second inaugural wasn't about policy. In fact, it was defiantly oblivious to policy—Bush's speech never even mentioned Iraq, and, the day after he delivered it, administration officials rushed to deny that it had real policy implications.

But that's exactly the point. Bush's second inaugural doesn't challenge liberals at the level of policy; it challenges them at the level of rhetoric. And, unless they respond in kind, they'll experience the same fate that befell John Kerry. In policy terms, Kerry probably had a more serious democratization agenda than Bush. But, rhetorically, he never matched Bush's grandeur. And, in the United States, where it is great causes and missionary impulses that rouse citizens to engage with the world, Bush's language captured the public imagination, and Kerry's did not.

Luckily for liberals, history offers them a moral language of their own, one that differs from Bush's in subtle but important ways. On March 13, 1961, when Kennedy introduced the Alliance for Progress, an ambitious (if flawed) effort to promote democracy and development in Latin America, he invited the region's ambassadors into the White House East Room—and apologized. "Let me be the first to admit," he said, "that we North Americans have not always grasped the significance of this common mission." More than a year later, speaking at the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, he did the same thing. And Kennedy didn't just apologize for things that occurred before he took office; he took responsibility for his own misdeeds, publicly accepting blame for the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion.

Why is Kennedy's language a useful alternative to the language of Bush, who famously never admits a mistake? First, because it has a better chance of being taken seriously in the Muslim world. People in the Middle East know their history, even if we don't. They know that the United States hasn't traditionally been a force for democracy in their countries. We haven't just enjoyed passive, see-no-evil relationships with dictatorships like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, we have actively intervened to overthrow democratic regimes, such as Mohammed Mossadegh's in 1953 in Iran. It is the refusal to acknowledge this history that makes Bush look so hypocritical and so arrogant in the eyes of many Muslims.

The second reason liberals should seek a language that fuses idealism with humility is that liberals themselves, far more than conservatives, remember the history of anti-democratic American behavior in the Third World. Conservatives consider it irrelevant to the Bush administration's supposed campaign for democracy that Dick Cheney voted to keep Nelson Mandela in jail and Donald Rumsfeld promoted an alliance between the United States and Saddam Hussein. But grassroots liberals don't, which means that Democratic politicians, who have to answer to their liberal base, have only two choices: a realist-isolationist language that does not depict the United States as a global democracy-promoter, or an idealism without illusions that recognizes America's flawed history on questions of global freedom.

But the third reason is the most important: Recognizing past American misdeeds has implications for how the United States promotes democracy today. The assumption that the United States can do no wrong leads naturally to unilateralism: Why sully our democracy-promotion efforts by partnering with other countries, which lack purity of heart? That implication was particularly widespread in the immediate aftermath of Saddam's overthrow, when conservatives argued against giving Turkey, France, or the United Nations a genuine role in the occupation on the grounds that Iraqis might distrust their motives. (As if the Iraqis didn't distrust our motives just as much.)

Recognizing U.S. fallibility, by contrast, highlights the value of democratic alliances and organizations, which serve as a bulwark against the narrow, anti-democratic self-interest of any one nation, including our own.

Consider the ongoing torture scandal. The Bush administration decided that it need not be bound by the international treaties on torture, and it deceived the investigators sent to determine whether our prisons were meeting international standards. The unstated rationale was that, for the United States, as opposed to every other nation on earth, such international obligations were unnecessary—as the beacon of world democracy, we were the human rights gold standard in and of ourselves. Well, it turns out we weren't. The myth of U.S. infallibility contributed to this moral blot on the post–September 11 United States. And then Bush, speaking in the shadow of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay in his second inaugural, perpetuated that myth once again.

The United States should hold the world to a higher standard, but ultimately the best way to do that is to allow others to hold us to a higher standard as well. In 1959, Chester Bowles, soon to become Kennedy's undersecretary of state, wrote that the world will see us as "no better than we actually are." Bush's second inaugural didn't recognize that. But, for liberals, who need an idealistic language of their own, it's a good place to start.

PETER BEINART

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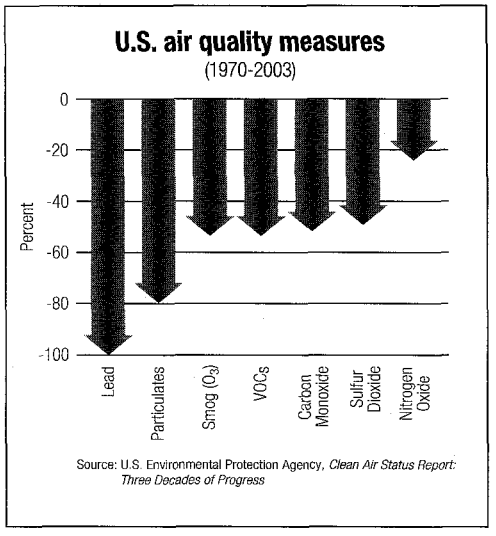
Good news on the environment

In late September 2004 the Environmental Protection Agency released a report on U.S. air quality: *Clean Air Status Report: Three Decades of Progress.*

In releasing the report, EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt stated that "emissions have been cut by more than half since...1970," and "today's air is the cleanest most Americans have ever breathed." Noting that the economy has grown by 176 percent over the same period, he observed that "cleaner air and an expanding economy can co-exist."



Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Clean Air Status Report: Three Decades of Progress*

This picture of the U.S. environment is not what a number of commentators have emphasized, so it is useful to look at the data that the EPA report included.

Some of the findings may surprise you.

The graph summarizes the trends in many air-quality environmental indicators that most affect Americans who live near major cities. The ones we have chosen to highlight are also those that are related to operations that ExxonMobil conducts or to consumer use of products that we produce.

Although not a measure of air quality, one environmental measure that is not specifically reported is carbon dioxide, which we estimate has risen about 25 percent since 1980 as U.S. energy use has grown.

Also in 2004, the American Enterprise Institute and the Pacific Research Institute released their tenth *Index of Leading Environmental Indicators* covering the years 1976 to 2002. Their general conclusions were similar to those of the EPA. However, for the first time the *Index* reported on trends for several air-quality measures in Europe, and while the specifics varied, the overall results largely paralleled U.S. trends. Clearly, there has been remarkable progress in the level of environmental improvement in both the U.S. and in Europe.

This progress has come about due to a sometimes uneasy but over the longer term a genuinely effective interaction between government policymakers and regulators and private businesses.

The private-sector role has been especially fruitful in providing the technological innovations that have made environmental improvements possible, in laying the groundwork for future advances, in pressing for a level playing field among choices, and in providing consumers with ever-better products. Government rules that rest on realistic expectations and sound science, and that recognize the central contributions of the market and private companies, have proven to provide a beneficial framework for this ongoing environmental progress.

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THE FEDS SAY THEY WANT SCIENTIFIC PROOF THAT MARIJUANA IS MEDICINE.

BUT DO THEY?

Three years ago scientists from the University of Massachusetts and the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies[1] applied to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for a license to grow a research plot of marijuana.

No response.

A year ago, they asked the DEA for permission to import 10 grams from the Dutch Office of Medicinal Cannabis.

No response.

Then they asked the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to sell 10 grams from NIDA's marijuana farm at the University of Mississippi.

Still no response.

The researchers could, of course, get all the marijuana they need from any high school or college campus in the country but that's not legal. NIDA has a monopoly on the supply of marijuana that can be used for research.[2] The Institute seems to be using that monopoly to obstruct the very research they're supposed to be facilitating.

So the scientists are suing the DEA, NIDA, Health and Human Services and the National Institutes of Health for "unreasonable delay" resulting in the obstruction of scientific research.

Science should be in the hands of scientists, not political ideologues.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
Mike Gray, Chair; Robert Field, Co-Chair

[1] For further information contact www.maps.org
[2] NIDA was given a monopoly only on the supply of marijuana and not on any other Schedule I drug.

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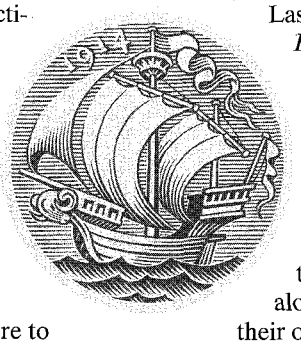
Insuring America

PRESS HONEST CONSERVATIVES on the dubious claims made by Social Security's would-be privatizers, and they will insist that the debate was never mainly about money or retirement. It has always been about values. "Social Security reform is not, at bottom, an economic issue with moral overtones," proclaimed *National Journal*'s Jonathan Rauch last month. "It is a moral issue with economic overtones." Or, as George F. Will put it, "[T]he philosophic reasons for reforming Social Security are more compelling than the fiscal reasons." The not-so-subtle implication is that Social Security is a program profoundly at odds with who we are as Americans.

Well, grant conservatives this much: Social Security *has* always been about values. But the values calculus overwhelmingly favors the current system. With the possible exception of the military, Social Security is the government enterprise most responsible for ensuring that the United States remains a liberal, democratic, and capitalist country. Abandon the program's core social insurance function, which is the practical goal of privatization, and you would have a society that neither Democrats nor Republicans would much want to live in.

President Bush has not been shy about touting privatization's potentially positive impact on values, arguing that private accounts would promote both patriotism ("because, if you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of your country") and "independence." But it's not entirely clear how privatization accomplishes either objective. Much of the stock Americans would purchase through their retirement accounts would be shares in large, multinational corporations. If Americans were to respond to the incentives of ownership as scrupulously as the president anticipates, owning stock would give them as many reasons to undercut U.S. interests as to promote them. Likewise, "independence" seems an elusive goal for a system that would require individuals to pick from a half-dozen low-risk funds and to convert most of their personal accounts into an annuity upon retirement.

Faced with this criticism, conservatives typically fall back on the most abstract notion of freedom as their true rationale for privatization—the idea that anything resulting in less government by definition creates more freedom. The fundamentalist simplicity of this logic is difficult to argue with. But it also reflects a deep misunderstanding of what, as a practical matter, allows people to be free. Thanks to Social Security, Americans who start businesses or invest their savings in the market can take the entrepreneurial risks that Republicans want them to take. They know that, if things don't pan out, they may not retire to the opulence they had hoped for, but neither will they have to live out their golden years in poverty. Take away Social Security, and it's a good bet that Americans would become more cautious in their careers and investment decisions—ultimately a little *less* free.



But perhaps more important than the values Social Security promotes are the values it embodies. Social Security is the capstone of a highly successful, century-long liberal effort, which included an expansion of public education and the creation of health insurance for the poor and elderly—in other words, the project of building a middle class. After all, the rich will never have to worry about access to education, medical care, or a dignified retirement. It is the rest of us whose fortunes rise and fall with government's role in these areas.

Republican hostility to these programs implies a cavalier attitude toward the future of capitalism and liberal democracy. Absent membership in a large and prosperous middle class, voters will always be tempted to embrace demagogues on the left or right who promise utopian solutions to their economic privation. Franklin Roosevelt made a form of this argument when he created Social Security during the Great Depression. It is no less valid today.

But the values that animate Social Security are even larger than that. Republicans have long complained that self-interested seniors represent the greatest obstacle to privatization. Last week, *The Washington Post* released a poll suggesting that the vast majority of people 55 and older not only oppose Bush's privatization plan, they do so knowing full well it wouldn't affect them one way or the other. So self-interest alone can't possibly explain their opposition. What can? We would suggest empathy: As people get older, the nightmare of having to live out their retirement in poverty becomes vivid, and they become more sympathetic to those who might suffer this fate even if it isn't likely to happen to them. If there's a better illustration of what makes a liberal society function, we are not aware of it. ■

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NOTEBOOK

THE NEW REPUBLIC: PAST PERFECT . . . AND IMPERFECT

On our ninetieth anniversary, here's a look back at what THE NEW REPUBLIC*'s writers were saying at other milestones in the magazine's history.*

90 Years of The New Republic

THE NEW REPUBLIC IS FRANKly an experiment. It is an attempt to find national audience for a journal of interpretation and opinion. Many people believe that such a journal is out of place in America; that if a periodical is to be popular, it must first of all be entertaining, or that if it is to be serious, it must be detached and select. Yet when the plan of The New Republic was being discussed it received spontaneous welcome from people in all parts of the country. They differed in theories and programmes; but they agreed that if The New Republic could bring sufficient enlightenment to the problems of the nation and sufficient sympathy to its complexities, it would serve all those who feel the challenge of our time. On the conviction that this is possible The New Republic is founded. Its success inevitably depends on public support, but if we are unable to achieve that success under the conditions essential to sound and disinterested thinking, we shall discontinue our experiment and make way for better men. Meanwhile, we set out with faith.

—The Editors in the first issue of the magazine, November 7, 1914

THE PROMISE OF AMERICAN LIFE IS still a real one; but it no longer rests upon the actual existence of free land, or democratic institutions, of faith in man's ability to direct his own destiny: it derives rather from the residue that these original facts have left in our mind. But apart from internal corrosion, our promise has to meet an external challenge: that is the present worldwide disintegration of western civilization. Of this threat, the fascist movement is a symptom rather than a cause: the cause lies in the fact that our profit economy, now that the period of expansions is over, must be transformed into a non-profit economy, relying upon other motives and incentives. If this change is not accomplished by rational cooperation it will have to take place, under unfavorable circumstances, by irrational compulsion; only to be defeated in the ultimate mockery of war. So far the New Deal has been a potent source of confusion: its theorists have held the wishful belief that profits could be increased while disparities between class and class, between region and region, were wiped out. Mr. Facing-Both-Ways will soon come to a dead end; then we shall have to choose between the rational and the irrational means of economic stabilization.

—Lewis Mumford, November 8, 1939

IF WE CAN NOW TALK SERIOUSLY about a Great Society, it is because we have boldly confronted earlier threats to the stability of the Republic. It is because we were willing to use federal power to create jobs and thus expand consumer demand; to redistribute income, build roads, preserve recreation areas, regulate monopolies, advance learning. It is because the weight of the nation has been put into the battle for equal rights and opportunities for Negroes. It is also because America helped its trans-Atlantic allies get back on their feet in the '40s, because we organized and supported a common defense, because we were firm in Korea and Berlin, because we have been willing to assist new nations in Africa and Asia to work their way out of dependence and deprivation.

—The Editors, November 7, 1964

LIBERALISM HAS WON THE BASIC contests—on the ideological level. The great historic struggles for acceptance of traditional liberal principles have been largely won, *mirabile dictu*. Anti-colonialism; racial equality; the entitlement of all people to minimal benefits and to legal and social rights—these are no longer principles around which the battle rages. They have moved from the ideological arena to the battlefield of implementation.

The question is no longer, "Are we committed to these principles?" but rather do we know how to deploy the resources of mind and material necessary to fulfill the promise implicit in these principles.

The answer is not clear. There is sad evidence that the acceptance of the great liberal principles may have exhausted the liberals' storehouse. There is little indication that we have the ideas or the blueprints or the organization to do the job.

We have succeeded in releasing people, here and throughout the world, who have long been unjustly restrained and oppressed; but neither we nor they have discovered how we can all live to-

DAVID COWLES

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gether. We have recognized that all people are entitled to life, liberty and an opportunity for comfort, dignity and self-fulfillment, but we haven't figured out how we can give this to them, or how we can prevent some of them from using liberty to attack or brutalize others, in recapitulation of the treatment that they received.

—Abe Fortas, November 9, 1974

IF THERE IS A CONSTANT THREAD THAT runs through the confusing history of TNR during the past 75 years, it is the difficulty, and the necessity, of mixing the ideal and the real. Kant said that a fanatic is somebody who dreams according to principles. We like to think we understand the difference between dreams and principles. Principles, if they are to live, must ready themselves for the intractability of the world. We are all "for" peace; but there is the fact that we have enemies, and the fact that they, too, have not disarmed. We are all "for" civil rights; but there is the fact of the underclass, and the fact of the growing popularity of separatist sentiments in the black community. We are all "for" prosperity; but there is the fact of poverty, and the prestige of greed—a greed that even conspires to expatriate our prosperity to others.

The human world is, among other things, a place of power. American liberalism once knew how to respect power without respecting it overmuch. The men who founded this magazine understood that there need be no contradictions between strength and justice—indeed that strength held wisely is justice's friend. There is, of course, the danger of complacency, of giving the hard and stubborn world more than its due, of being realists only. But we still believe in the possibility of change, in the moral and historical grandeur of individual and social action—and in the importance of ideas as the seed of change and the springs of action. Otherwise we may as well let television have it all.

—The Editors, November 6, 1989

TNR Foibles

Throughout our first nine decades, the best TNR *journalism has been not only insightful, but prescient. Then there's this:*

CREDIT FOR BOLDNESS

I would be willing to bet money on the following proposition: assuming Reagan is reelected next year (a hideous but likely prospect), and assuming we get through his second term without any thermonuclear unpleasantness, then the Democratic nominee in 1988 will be Mario Cuomo. I'm not just *saying* I'm willing to bet on this; I actually have a couple of sizable bets down on it already. I also think Governor Cuomo will win the election, and that he will serve ably as the President of the United States from 1989 until 1997. Remember, you read it here first.

—Hendrik Hertzberg, June 6, 1983

MIND YOU, THAT INTERREGNUM MIGHT LAST A WHILE

Iran is now too much advanced to be ruled by the *ayatollahs*. ... If the present government were overthrown the extreme left would have to submit to the demands of the *ayatollahs*. But the power of the *ayatollahs*, considerable as it is, is purely negative. They may be able to bring down a government, but they cannot run the country. Thus, chances are that after an interregnum, a military leader will emerge who, under the cover of populist slogans, will follow a policy not perhaps that different from the present one.

—Walter Laqueur, September 23, 1978

OK, AT LEAST BILL KRISTOL DIDN'T MIND

One Democratic consultant insists that discussing [Bill] Clinton's prospects against [George H.W.] Bush is "like engaging in necrophilia." Every party figure he's talked to, the consultant says, "thinks it's going to be a disaster." Why? Because Clinton has problems in four separate areas: the character issue, voter turnout, the South, and foreign policy. These problems are all the more troublesome because there's no clear way to overcome them. ... Absent a [Bush] scandal or economic collapse, Clinton's a goner.

—Fred Barnes, May 4, 1992

THE CRAZY IMAGINATION OF DICK LUGAR

With the primary season imminent and his poll numbers in the basement, Lugar has launched a last-ditch ad campaign to salvage his run for the GOP nomination. The four-part storyline depicts a band of terrorists who have gotten hold of nuclear materials and are threatening to blow up an American city. Like a bad NBC miniseries, the ads show armed gunmen who look like campaign staffers and a teddy-clutching little girl who asks, "Mommy, won't the bomb wake everybody up?," which is exactly what Lugar is hoping to do. Instead, he has managed to undermine the one element that sets him apart from his competitors: seriousness.

—Notebook, January 8 & 15, 1996

WELL, MAYBE MORE LIKE TEN THAN FIVE

For the moment, Berkeley is in order, if not at peace. Pickets have put away their placards, classes have been resumed, and so it will remain if the regents behave sensibly. And in five or ten years, the demonstrators will talk nostalgically about the old days and think that the new undergraduates have no fire in their bellies.

—Gilbert A. Harrison, December 19, 1964 (five years before the People's Park riots in 1969)

JUST BE SURE NOT TO WALK AROUND IT

The Maginot Line is a system of massive permanent forts, especially in the central part between Luxembourg and the Rhine. Its most important masses are buried deep below the surface and are so extensive that large bodies of troops can be housed in permanent garrisons. They are connected with each other, are mechanized on a large scale and have powerful fire concentration. Both the artillery and the defenders are extremely well protected. The defenders are provided with everything necessary to enable them to offer prolonged resistance, from stocks of ammunition to articles for the troops' personal comfort.

—Max Werner, November 15, 1939

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THAT PARTY, ANYWAY?

The rebuilding of the Republican Party, if it is to come at all, must take place in a climate of public skepticism, even cynicism, about the party as an institution, and at a time when the party is deeply at odds with itself. ... The other option for the GOP is to remain for the next two years at a factional impasse, to fail to assemble a unified voice of opposition, or ... to lay the burden down and leave it. If the Republicans choose the latter, they will merely hasten the end, and after the next election we will not be talking of reorganization plans but of benedictions.

—The Editors, November 20, 1976

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When the religious right was left.

Faith Full

BY E. J. DIONNE JR.

"PREACHERS," THE CRITIC declared, "are not called upon to be politicians but to be soul-winners." As it happens, this is not some secular liberal denying faith's legitimate influence on politics. The words are Jerry Falwell's. His scorn—he made the statement in 1965—was directed at the church-based civil rights movement in the South. Falwell knew that, without the black church, there would have been no civil rights movement. It bothered conservatives like Falwell that the civil rights preachers were, well, so *judgmental*, so eager to associate their cause with God's. "If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong!" a young reverend named Martin Luther King Jr. declared in December 1955 at the Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. "If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer and never came down to earth!"

How strange it is that American liberalism, nourished by faith and inspired by the scriptures from the days of abolitionism, is now defined—by its enemies but occasionally by its friends—as implacably hostile to religion. The greatest victory of the religious right is *not* its success in turning out the vote of religious conservatives. The Christian Right has damaged liberalism most by calling forth a liberal reaction against religion's public role. Too many liberals have been complicit in the conservatives' redefinition of "moral values" as always involving sex, and "religious activism" as always referring to the activities of Falwell and his friends. Confronted with a new religious right from the 1970s on, many liberals were at least as eager to attack the "religious" as to turn back the "right."

Yes, liberalism has always included a strong strain of secularism, a proper wariness about the abuses of religious authority, and a particular fear of the Catholic Church. "Rationalism" was seen as the enemy of "obscurantism," "reason" the antithesis of "faith." The separation of church and state was an important liberal victory for freedom of conscience—even if it is forgotten that disestablishment was a cause pursued with passion by devout believers loyal to denominations that found themselves in the minority.

But, precisely because the United States did not experience the religious wars as Europe did, American liberalism was always more tempered in its attitude toward faith than the European variety. By and large, religious Americans returned the favor, embracing the regime of liberty and pluralism. The current conflict between liberalism and religion is thus a break from U.S. history, an anachronistic replay of Europe's nineteenth-century battles between the schoolteacher and the priest.

AMERICAN LIBERALISM CANNOT be understood apart from an understanding of its religious sources. No less a rationalist than John Dewey, himself nurtured in New England Congregationalism from which he drifted, could call the great fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan "the backbone of philanthropic social interest, of social reform through political action, of pacifism, of popular education." Today, Bryan is best known for his passionate opposition to Darwin and evolution. But it was Bryan, says historian Michael Kazin, who "transformed his party from a bulwark of conservatism ... into a bastion of anticorporate Progressivism." He preached "a simple pragmatic Gospel: Only mobilized citizens, imbued with Christian morality, could save the nation from 'predatory' interests and the individuals who did their bidding." As historian Garry Wills has noted, Bryan could point with pride to the success of the many causes he had championed "in their embattled earlier stages." The catalogue is impressive: women's suffrage, the federal income tax, railroad regulation, currency reform, state initiative and referendum, a Department of Labor, campaign fund disclosure, and opposition to capital punishment.

Bryan's progressivism was not eccentric among believers. The Social Gospel arose in the early twentieth century from the reflections of religious social workers confronting the contradiction between the promises of God's kingdom and the conditions in the slums. Christian social activists were among those who cheered Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 when he declared, "We stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord." The Lord, in this instance, was presumed to be on the side of TR's Progressive Party, a cause to which THE NEW REPUBLIC's editor Herbert Croly was also devoted.

The progressive spirit was alive within Catholicism no less than within Protestantism. The Catholic Bishops' 1919 Program of Social Reconstruction was a primary source of New Deal ideas and laid the basis for the close cooperation between the Church and the trade-union movement in the 1930s and 1940s. The link between religion and social reform was not artificial; it was the natural outgrowth of religion's skepticism of materialism and its search for what was called in the civil rights years a "beloved community." The religiously inspired could not help but question the impact of industrialization on family life—and on the morals of those forced into impoverished urban neighborhoods. What's striking about the American religious reformers is that they did not, on the whole, lapse into nostalgia for rural life. They were occasionally utopian, but most were realistic, and, as Bryan's record shows, creative in the reforms they proposed.

If religious reformers nurtured liberalism's communitarian wing, American liberalism also strengthened the advo-

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cates of toleration and pluralism within the religious community. The great reforms in the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council were championed by American bishops, inspired by John Courtney Murray. The American theologian helped overturn the Church's previous orthodoxy that, in some catechisms, had declared liberalism "a sin," and Murray deserves part of the credit for Pope John XXIII's achievement. American liberalism may thus have helped ease Europe's conflicts between believers and secularists. That makes all the more peculiar our recent importation of European-style religious politics.

Religious thinkers influenced liberals' views on foreign policy as well as social justice, perhaps none more than Reinhold Niebuhr, the great Protestant theologian and frequent contributor to this magazine. He transformed American liberalism by teaching liberals about Augustine and original sin. It was in these pages that Niebuhr famously cited a British journal to the effect that original sin is the only empirically verifiable doctrine of the Christian Church. (Niebuhr himself is usually credited with the line, but he was no plagiarist.) Liberalism was easily attacked for resting on a soupy optimism about human nature and for a self-righteous idealism that had little self-awareness. With the rise of the Nazis and the Stalinists in the '30s, this optimism could not hold. Niebuhr imbued liberalism with realism—about the world in general and human nature in particular—which brought him his share of critics. But he rescued the liberal creed from sentimentalism. He was tough on liberals who thought they could stay out of the world's conflicts (which is why the hawks love him), but also tough on liberals who would engage in crusades and disguise self-interest behind noble, utopian claims (which means that the doves underrate him). Niebuhr, a brilliant aphorist, provided liberals with a credo: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's capacity for injustice makes democracy necessary." Hope for democracy is tempered by an awareness of sin that only reinforces the democratic imperative. No wonder Arthur Schlesinger Jr. announced the creation of a notional organization called Atheists for Niebuhr. No wonder Abraham Joshua Heschel, another giant in the mid-twentieth-century dialogue between religion and liberalism, would write upon Niebuhr's death that "the world will be darker without you." On this, as on other matters, Heschel was right.

IT WOULD BE decidedly un-Niebuhrian to believe that the American love affair between religion and liberalism could continue on uninterrupted by contention. It was, to begin with, a love affair between liberalism and *certain kinds* of religion. There was an old Christian Right—its history is documented by the historian Leo Ribuffo—that had nothing in common with liberalism, at times veering toward anti-Semitism and fascism. There were liberals and socialists who never lost their antipathy to religion as an opiate of the masses, and some, like Paul Blanshard, who never gave up their mistrust of the Roman Church. There were conservative Christians who, as Niebuhr wrote in this magazine in 1960, held to "the old individualistic Calvinism, which assumed the private virtues of industry, honesty, and thrift made public policy in dealing with rising industry unnecessary." There were segregationists who believed the separation of the races as decreed by God.

But there can be no denying that a rupture occurred between liberalism and traditional religious progressives in the '60s. That decade saw the rise of a new skepticism about social control and a new emphasis on personal autonomy in moral matters. Until then, most religious progressives believed that self-improvement and self-control were intimately linked to the cause of social reform itself. They were prepared to use the state not only to regulate rapacious capitalists, but also the behavior of individuals. Their great experiment in this regard was Prohibition, which failed, but the link it embodied between self-improvement and social improvement endured in progressive causes from trade unionism to civil rights. Yet, since the '60s, as Peter Steinfels has said, "American liberalism has shifted its passion from issues of economic deprivation and concentration of power to issues of gender, sexuality, and personal choice. ... Once trade unionism, regulation of the market, and various welfare measures were the litmus tests of secular liberalism. Later, desegregation and racial justice were the litmus tests. Today the litmus test is abortion. ..." And, one might add, stem-cell research, gay marriage, and Hollywood culture.

This rupture, and not simply shrewd organizing by Jerry Falwell, Ralph Reed, and Karl Rove, accounts for the rise of the religious right. The abortion issue in particular creates a new estrangement between pro-life liberals (particularly Catholics like Steinfels) and the broader liberal cause. The liberalism of Niebuhr's day lived comfortably within an old-fashioned world evoked movingly by Niebuhr's daughter Elisabeth Sifton in her book *The Serenity Prayer*. Contemporary liberalism is conflicted about that world, and for good reason, given the huge advances in freedom over the last 40 years for women, homosexuals, and, of course, African Americans. Niebuhr, himself a strong civil rights advocate, helped pioneer many of these changes. But it is undeniable that the new moral issues split the very religious institutions that, in an earlier time, were largely sympathetic to liberalism's demands for social reform. One wonders: What would William Jennings Bryan do? Would he be furious at Rove for hijacking evangelicals into the party that supports corporate power and wants to reverse the progressive tax code? Or would Bryan, reluctantly perhaps, join with Republican social conservatives to defend his values and his faith?

THAT WWWJBD QUESTION may seem beside the point to latter-day liberals. They would note, correctly, that a significant share of the religious community is already allied with liberalism, or at least the Democratic Party: a large majority of Jews, nearly half of Roman Catholics, a growing number of main-

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line Protestants, a significant minority of evangelicals, and most followers of non-Judeo-Christian religions. As for right-wing Christians, they are no more likely to support liberal causes than they were in Niebuhr's or Heschel's day. And secular voters represent a slowly rising share of the electorate.

This is true, but it fails to address the tug of social conservatism on many Americans who are otherwise open to the very kind of liberalism that Bryan (or, for that matter, Niebuhr) represented. It fails to deal seriously with religious moderates whose social views are broadly tolerant but who share with conservatives an unease about the direction of the culture—people who may be sympathetic to gays and lesbians but have no use for wardrobe malfunctions or trashy television. It fails to take seriously that there is loss as well as gain when too sharp a line is drawn between those in politics who emphasize social change and those who emphasize self-improvement. You do not have to be a neoconservative to believe that the public interest does depend, at least in part, on private virtue.

Many have longed for a new Reinhold Niebuhr to inspire a new generation of religious liberals. I have shared in that longing. But it is doubtful that even Niebuhr could be Niebuhr now, and, in any event, can you think of a talk show that would book him? But the ground might be prepared for a sort of second coming, a renewed dialogue between liberalism and faith communities. Liberals could begin by abandoning prejudices about people of faith. Liberals, after all, regularly call on others to abandon their own prejudices. Liberals should feel no obligation to defend all aspects of commercial culture. When TV networks and Hollywood exploit sex to make money, shouldn't liberals ask why it is that the very free market so revered by the right wing promotes values that the very same right wing claims to despise? The coarsening of the culture that traditionalist conservatives denounce is abetted by the very media concentration that economic conservatives defend. Why are liberals so tongue-tied in exposing this contradiction?

Even when they espouse "choice" on abortion, is it so difficult for liberals to describe the choice itself as tragic and to insist that the surest way to reduce the number of abortions is to improve social conditions, especially the condition of the poor? The vast majority of religious Americans, including many who call themselves conservative, still feel a calling to the poor, still understand that families have interests that the market may not defend, and still worry, as Bryan did, about concentrated power—economic as well as political. These, too, are moral issues.

Conservatives like the religious landscape just the way it is, which is why liberals should take on the, yes, prophetic challenge of rearranging it. Kazin, for one, suggests this would be worth the effort. In the United States, he writes, "[T]he Left has never advanced without a moral awakening entangled with notions about what the Lord would have us do." ■

The anti-dogma dogma.

Fact Finders

BY JONATHAN CHAIT

IMAGINE THAT GOD were to appear on Earth for the unlikely purpose of settling, once and for all, our disputes over economic policy. And suppose that, to my enormous surprise, he announced that every empirical claim advanced by conservatives was correct. Cutting taxes produces such great economic growth that even the poor benefit. Privatizing or eliminating social programs like Medicare and Social Security will cause the elderly to save more money and enjoy higher living standards. Slashing regulations, by eliminating unintended side effects, actually does a better job helping those whom the regulations were intended to help than the regulations themselves. Suppose that God presented these conclusions so convincingly—if his stature alone did not suffice—that everybody immediately accepted them as truth.

How would liberals respond? No doubt by rethinking and abandoning nearly all their long-held positions. Liberalism, after all, claims to produce certain outcomes: more prosperity and security, especially for the poor and middle classes; a cleaner environment; safer foods and drugs; and so on. If it were proved beyond a doubt that liberal policies fail to produce those outcomes—or even, as conservatives often claim, that such policies hurt their intended beneficiaries—then their rationale would disappear. It may be hard to imagine liberals advocating capital gains tax cuts as a way to lift up the working stiff. But that's just because there's no evidence to show they do. If the evidence were to change, so would the liberal mindset. The point is that liberalism has no justification other than the belief that liberal policies produce beneficial outcomes.

Now imagine the opposite were to happen. God appears in order to affirm liberal precepts: Current tax levels barely affect economic incentives, social programs provide tremendous economic security at modest cost to growth, and most regulations achieve their intended effects without producing undue distortions. Would economic conservatives likewise abandon their views? Some certainly would, but a great many would not. Economic conservatism, unlike liberalism, would survive having all its empirical underpinnings knocked out from beneath it.

And not because conservatives are necessarily more stubborn. (Indeed, on an individual level, liberals may well be just as stubborn as conservatives.) Rather, conservatism, unlike liberalism, overlays a deeper set of philosophical principles. Conservatives believe that big government impinges upon freedom. They may also believe that big government imposes large costs on the economy. But, for a true

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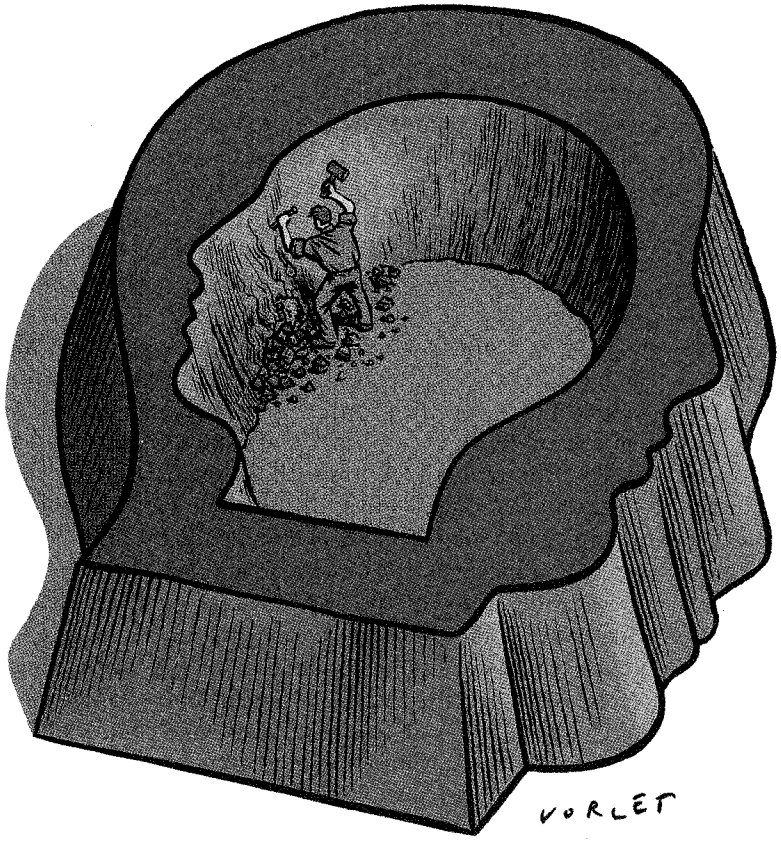
conservative, whatever ends they think smaller government may bring about—greater prosperity, economic mobility for the non-rich—are almost beside the point. As Milton Friedman wrote, "[F]reedom in economic arrangements is itself a component of freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself."

We're accustomed to thinking of liberalism and conservatism as parallel ideologies, with conservatives preferring less government and liberals preferring more. The equivalency breaks down, though, when you consider that liberals never claim that increasing the size of government is an end in itself. Liberals only support larger government if they have some reason to believe that it will lead to material improvement in people's lives. Conservatives also want material improvement in people's lives, of course, but proving that their policies can produce such an outcome is a luxury, not a necessity.

The contrast between economic liberalism and economic conservatism, then, ultimately lies not only in different values or preferences but in different epistemologies. Liberalism is a more deeply pragmatic governing philosophy—more open to change, more receptive to empiricism, and ultimately better at producing policies that improve the human condition—than conservatism.

Now, liberalism's pragmatic superiority wouldn't matter to a true ideological conservative any more than news about the medical benefits of pork (to pick an imaginary example) would cause a strictly observant Jew to begin eating ham sandwiches. But, if you have no particular a priori preference about the size of government and care only about tangible outcomes, then liberalism's aversion to dogma makes it superior as a practical governing philosophy.



CHRISTOPHE VORLET

CONSERVATIVES DON'T ALWAYS dwell on their first principles because those principles have little use in converting unbelievers. But they pop up from time to time, especially when conservative factual claims come under stress.

Take, for instance, the current debate over privatizing Social Security. *Los Angeles Times* Editorial Page Editor Michael Kinsley has argued that privatization cannot increase national wealth—an argument that, if true, would undermine the idea's central rationale. A recent *National Review* editorial implicitly accepted the thrust of Kinsley's argument and proceeded to gamely offer up some possible second- and third-order benefits that privatization could produce. (People might be induced to save a bit more, and maybe higher debt would discourage spending.) Seemingly unpersuaded by its own reasoning, the editorial righted itself by declaring that "reducing dependence on Washington is a worthy goal in its own right."

Likewise, conservative columnist George F. Will conceded not long ago that, contrary to the claims of privatization advocates, Social Security does not face a financing crisis. But Will declared his support for privatization anyway. "[T]he best reasons rise from the philosophy of freedom: Voluntary personal accounts will allow competing fund managers, rather than a government monopoly on income transfers from workers to retirees, to allocate a large pool of money."

This preference for removing power from Washington is simply something that either you accept or you don't. It's neither right nor wrong in an absolute sense. It does, however, make empirical reasoning pointless. Viewed pragmatically, Social Security raises questions about which economics has a lot to say: balancing the tradeoffs between retiree incomes and costs to workers, allocating risk, and so on. Liberal thinking, unlike conservative thinking, actually hinges on the outcome of those questions.

This doesn't mean that conservatives don't believe their own empirical arguments. Nor does it mean that ideologically driven thinking can't lead to empirically sound outcomes. In many cases—conservative opposition to tariffs, price controls, and farm subsidies—it does. But empirical reasoning simply does not drive their thinking. What appears to be conservative economic reasoning is actually a kind of backward reasoning. It begins with the conclusion and marches back through the premises.

Consider the conservative view of health care. Conservatives repeat the mantra that the

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United States has "the best health care system in the world"—a formulation used endlessly by President Bush. That isn't true by almost any objective measure. The United States devotes a far higher share of its economy to health care than any other country. Yet, according to the most recent World Health Organization study, the United States ranks just 37th in overall health care performance. These massive inefficiencies derive in part from our huge numbers of uninsured. The uninsured end up forgoing treatment until they arrive at the emergency room. Basic preventive care, of the sort universally available in every other advanced country, would avert such disasters—at less cost to the economy and with less suffering and fatality for patients.

The only way to deem the U.S. system the "best" is if you substitute ideological criteria for pragmatic criteria. Our health care system is indeed the best at minimizing the role of government. France, on the other hand, produces better measurable health outcomes at a vastly lower cost. Yet conservatives would consider the notion that France has a better health care system than the United States to be self-evidently false.

The conundrum is that the remedy of smaller government is particularly ill-suited for the problem of health care. The market for medical services does not resemble the market for blue jeans. Among other problems, health insurance firms have every incentive to deny coverage to those most likely to get sick, which makes the individual health insurance market inefficient and prohibitively expensive. Economists call this phenomenon "adverse selection," and it is inherent in the private health care market. It cannot be solved without some kind of government intervention.

For this reason, conservatives have almost nothing to say about adverse selection. When they do write about the topic, they tend to call for bromides like (to take an example from a David Brooks *New York Times Magazine* essay last year) "reforming the health care system so competition works as it does in every other sphere—to improve value, spur innovation and reduce costs." This is classic backward reasoning: Start with a solution (competition) and then proceed to make it fit the problem. In this case, the author doesn't even explain *how* to make the solution fit the problem. He simply assumes that it can be done because market forces work everywhere and always.

IF LIBERALISM IS not the mirror image of conservatism, what is? The more apt parallel is probably socialism. True socialists believe that allowing capitalists to keep some of the fruits of workers' labor is inherently immoral. They also tend to believe that free enterprise does not work very well. But, like the conservative belief that big government doesn't work well, this empirical belief merely sits atop a deeper normative belief. For committed socialists, doing away with "exploitation" is an end in itself.

Contemporary economic liberalism is less of an ideology than the absence of one—a rejection both of dogmatic fealty and hostility to the free market. Franklin Roosevelt famously called for "bold, persistent experimentation." The New Dealers vacillated wildly between promoting competition and squelching it, fiscal tightening and fiscal loosening, putting people to work and pulling workers out of the labor pool. They were accused, correctly, of incoherence.

But incoherence is simply the natural byproduct of a philosophy rooted in experimentation and the rejection of ideological certainty. In an open letter to Roosevelt, John Maynard Keynes called him "the Trustee for those in every country who seek to mend the evils of our condition by reasoned experiment within the framework of the existing social system. If you fail, rational change will be gravely prejudiced throughout the world, leaving orthodoxy and revolution to fight it out." Note how Keynes defined his and Roosevelt's shared ideology as "reasoned experiment" and "rational change" and contrasted it with orthodoxy (meaning the conservative dogma that market economics were self-correcting) and revolution.

That definition of liberal obviously leaves a very wide berth. It's wide enough, in fact, to encompass every president from FDR until at least Ronald Reagan. At the time, of course, liberals did not consider Republicans like Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon their ideological kin. But, in historical retrospect, that is only because the underlying assumptions of the New Deal were so broadly shared. It was impossible to imagine a president who stood outside that consensus, so all the fights took place within it. While those on the right wing of this ideological consensus were more cautious about government activism than those on the left wing, they did not challenge the underlying assumptions.

Eisenhower used the federal government, rather than states and localities, to build the Federal Highway System, and he made no effort to reduce a top tax rate that stood at an absurdly high 91 percent. Nixon declared, "We are all Keynesians now." He raised Social Security benefits and proposed an ambitious national health care plan. Conservatives have since renounced Nixon's economic record, and no wonder. Today it would place him on the left edge of the Democratic Party.

It's not a coincidence that the two most economically liberal Republican presidents—Nixon and his successor, Gerald Ford—also displayed the most serious interest in empiricism. Both required their assistants to produce detailed "Brandeis briefs" outlining the essential arguments on both sides of any policy debate. Ford invited Milton Friedman and John Kenneth Galbraith into the Oval Office for a free-ranging debate on economic policy.

Since the mid-'70s, the GOP has grown steadily more conservative, and therefore less pragmatic. Genuine ideological conservatives, banished to minority status since Eisenhower, briefly resurfaced under Barry Goldwater, and, after falling back again, began to take control of the Republican Party. Conservatives correctly see George W. Bush as one of their own. Bush does frequently depart from conservative orthodoxy, as with his tariffs, farm subsidies,

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and Medicare drug benefit. Yet conservatives understand that Bush sees these compromises as politically expedient, not a genuinely felt embrace of expansive government. His signature proposals—massive tax cuts and Social Security privatization—both reflect a belief that reducing government is an end in itself. Outside events exert not even the slightest influence on his policy goals. Bush steadfastly embraced his tax cuts as the economy veered from boom and surplus to slowdown to wartime to recovery and deficit.

Meanwhile, Democrats have continuously reexamined their policies in light of changing conditions. Bill Clinton came to office planning to spur the economy with a Keynesian stimulus, but abandoned those plans after fierce debate among his staff economists. Instead he embraced the novel goal of sparking recovery by slashing the deficit in the hopes that lower interest rates would enable sustainable growth. As that policy seemed to work, moderate liberals continued to embrace the credo of fiscal restraint. But, after the economy slid toward a recession in 2001, liberal economists abandoned short-term restraint in favor of temporary tax cuts to encourage spending.

Clinton also recognized the failure of welfare, previously a cherished liberal goal, to accomplish its stated purpose, and he enacted a sweeping overhaul. Many liberals complained, but the main objections centered around the details—certain punitive provisions and the lack of adequate job-creation measures—not the concept of welfare reform.

That Clinton's economic policymakers had great use for empirical inquiry, and Bush's do not, is hardly a secret. One way to see the contrast is to compare the economic summits each president has held. Clinton's 1992 Little Rock economic summit featured a vigorous and open-ended debate between diverse participants, and it helped persuade the Clinton team to alter the economic blueprint developed during the campaign. Bush's summits have been tightly scripted affairs in which supporters testify to the virtues of his policies.

Or compare two memoirs: Robert Reich's *Locked in the Cabinet* and Paul O'Neill's *The Price of Loyalty*. Both books chronicle the disillusionment of a former Cabinet member. Reich, the former Clinton labor secretary, bemoans the triumph of cautious deficit-cutting over public investment, but his tale is larded with academic policy debates he simply happened to lose. O'Neill, the former Bush Treasury secretary, mourns that administration's hostility to expertise and fact-driven debate. "You don't have to know anything or search for anything," he says of the ideologues in the administration. "You already know the answer to everything. It's not penetrable by facts. It's absolutism."

Part of this difference reflects the cultural predilections of the last two presidents—Bush is the instinctive anti-intellectual who likes to go with his gut, and Clinton is the former Rhodes scholar who relished academic debates. But it also reflects the natural tendencies of conservatism and liberalism. Bush's administration gives primacy to political advisers over policy wonks in large part because they have no need to debate their ends, only the means of achieving them.

The next liberal administration, whenever it happens, will not be nearly so certain. Aside from rolling back conservative excesses, its economic agenda will take its cue from external events, and the decisions it arrives at could, in time, be cast aside through experimentation. Ultimately, those policies, whether they move left or right, will be measured against their effect on people's lives, not the degree to which they bring the government closer to some long-ago agreed-upon vision. In time, those policies will be altered yet again to suit a changing world. This is known as progress. ■

Losing our delusions.

Not Much Left

BY MARTIN PERETZ

I THINK IT WAS John Kenneth Galbraith, speaking in the early 1960s, the high point of post–New Deal liberalism, who pronounced conservatism dead. Conservatism, he said, was "bookless," a characteristic Galbraithian, which is to say Olympian, verdict. Without books, there are no ideas. And it is true: American conservatism was, at the time, a congeries of cranky prejudices, a closed church with an archaic doctrine proclaimed by spoiled swells. William F. Buckley Jr. comes to mind, and a few others whose names will now resonate with almost nobody. Take as just one instance Russell Kirk, an especially prominent conservative intellectual who, as Clinton Rossiter (himself a moderate conservative) wrote, has "begun to sound like a man born one hundred and fifty years too late and in the wrong country."

At this point in history, it is liberalism upon which such judgments are rendered. And understandably so. It is liberalism that is now bookless and dying. The most penetrating thinker of the old liberalism, the Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, is virtually unknown in the circles within which he once spoke and listened, perhaps because he held a gloomy view of human nature. However gripping his illuminations, however much they may have been validated by history, liberals have no patience for such pessimism. So who has replaced Niebuhr, the once-commanding tribune to both town and gown? It's as if no one even tries to fill the vacuum. Here and there, of course, a university personage appears to assert a small didactic point and proves it with a vast and intricate academic apparatus. In any case, it is the apparatus that is designed to persuade, not the idea.

Ask yourself: Who is a truly influential liberal mind in our culture? Whose ideas challenge and whose ideals

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inspire? Whose books and articles are read and passed around? There's no one, really. What's left is the laundry list: the catalogue of programs (some dubious, some not) that Republicans aren't funding, and the blogs, with their daily panic dose about how the Bush administration is ruining the country.

Europe is also making the disenchanting journey from social democracy, but via a different route. Its elites had not foreseen that a virtually unchecked Muslim immigration might hijack the welfare state and poison the postwar culture of relative tolerance that supported its politics. To the contrary, Europe's leftist elites lulled the electorates into a false feeling of security that the new arrivals were simply doing the work that unprecedented low European birth rates were leaving undone. No social or cultural costs were to be incurred. Transaction closed. Well, it was not quite so simple. And, while the workforce still needs more workers, the economies of Europe have been dragged down by social guarantees to large families who do not always have a wage-earner in the house. So, even in the morally self-satisfied Scandinavian and Low Countries, the assuring left-wing bromides are no longer believed.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN right and left in the United States is different. What animates American conservatism is the future of the regulatory state and the trajectory of federalism. The conservatives have not themselves agreed on how far they want to retract either regulation or the authority of the national government. These are not axiomatic questions for them, as can be seen by their determined and contravening success last week in empowering not the states against Washington but Washington against the states in the area of tort law. As Jeffrey Rosen has pointed out in these pages, many of these issues will be fought out in the courts. But not all. So a great national debate will not be avoided.

Liberals have reflexes on these matters, and these reflexes put them in a defensive posture. But they have not yet conducted an honest internal conversation that assumes from the start that the very nature of the country has changed since the great New Deal reckoning. Surely there are some matters on which the regulatory state can relax. Doubtless also there are others that can revert to the states. Still, liberals know that the right's ideologically framed—but class-motivated—retreat of the government from the economy must be resisted. There will simply be too many victims left on the side of the road.

At the same time, U.S. politics has not yet confronted a phenomenon that has been on the front page of the international financial press for years. This is the dizzying specter of economic competition from China, whose hold on U.S. Treasury bonds leaves the dollar vulnerable to a tremendous decline should China decide to sell them. (There is a new model of society emerging before our eyes: a most rapacious capitalist economy under a most pitiless communist political tyranny.) The industrialized states of Europe and, predictably, Japan are battening down their hatches rather than admitting to the challenge from China. But China will not go away.

There is also a rapacious capitalism in our own country. Of course, it is not as brutalizing as it is in China. But it is demoralizing and punishing. Moreover, it threatens its own ethical foundations. The great achievement of U.S. capitalism was that it became democratic, and the demos could place reasonable trust in its institutions. The very extent of stockholding through mutual funds, pension funds, and individual holdings is a tribute to the reliability of the market makers, the corporations themselves, and their guarantors. We now know that much of this confidence was misplaced and that some of the most estimable companies and financial institutions were cooking the books and fixing the odds for the favored. Eliot Spitzer has taught us a great lesson in our vulnerability. Many individual corporations, investment banks, stock brokerages, insurance companies, auditors, and, surely, lawyers who vetted their contracts and other arrangements were complicit in violating the public trust. What does a certification of a financial report by an accounting firm actually prove when each of the Big Four (formerly the Big Five) has been culpable of unethical behavior on several counts? What has happened on Wall Street in the last few years would be tantamount to the doctors of the great teaching hospitals in the United States deciding in secret to abjure the Hippocratic Oath. For some reason, even liberals have been loath to confront this reality of the country's corporate and financial life. Yes, it is true that greed plays a role, even a creative role, in economic progress. Still, greed need not go unbridled. What is a responsible liberal for if he doesn't take on this task?

LIBERALS LIKE TO blame their political consultants. But then, if you depend on consultants for your motivating ideas, you are nowhere. So let's admit it: The liberals are themselves uninspired by a vision of the good society—a problem we didn't have 30 years ago. For several years, the liberal agenda has looked and sounded like little more than a bookkeeping exercise. We want to spend more, they less. In the end, the numbers do not clarify; they confuse. Almost no one can explain any principle behind the cost differences. But there are grand matters that need to be addressed, and the grandest one is what we owe each other as Americans. People who are voluntarily obliged to each other across classes and races, professions and ethnicities, tend to trust each other, like a patient his doctor and a student her teacher. It is not easy to limn out such a vision practically. But we have it in our bones.

In our bones or not, it is an exacting and long-time task. It's much easier, more comfortable, to do the old refrains. You can easily rouse a crowd when you get it to sing, "We Shall Overcome." One of the tropes that trips off the tongues of American liberals is the civil rights theme of the

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'60s. Another is that U.S. power is dangerous to others and dangerous to us. This is also a reprise from the '60s, the late '60s. Virtue returns, it seems, merely by mouthing the words.

One of the legacies of the '60s is liberal idealism about race. But that discussion has grown particularly outmoded in the Democratic Party. African Americans and Caribbean Americans (the differences between them another largely unspoken reality) have made tremendous strides in their education, in social mobility, in employment, in housing, and in politics as images and realities in the media. Even the gap in wealth accumulation between whites and blacks has begun to narrow, and, on this, even tremendous individual achievement over one generation cannot compensate for the accumulated advantages of inherited money over two or three generations. Still, the last 30 years separate two worlds. The statistics prove it. And this, too, we know in our bones.

But, in the Democratic Party, among liberals, the usual hustlers are still cheered. Jesse Jackson is still paid off, mostly not to make trouble. The biggest insult to our black fellow citizens was the deference paid to Al Sharpton during the campaign. Early in the race, it was clear that he—like Carol Moseley Braun and Dennis Kucinich—was not a serious candidate. Yet he was treated as if he just might take the oath of office at the Capitol on January 20. In the end, he won only a handful of delegates. But he was there, speaking in near–prime time to the Democratic convention. Sharpton is an inciter of racial conflict. To him can be debited the fraudulent and dehumanizing scandal around Tawana Brawley (conflating scatology and sex), the Crown Heights violence between Jews and blacks, a fire in Harlem, the protests around a Korean grocery store in Brooklyn, and on and on. Yet the liberal press treats Sharpton as a genuine leader, even a moral one, the trickster as party statesman.

This patronizing attitude is proof positive that, as deep as the social and economic gains have been among African Americans, many liberals prefer to maintain their own time-honored patronizing position vis-à-vis "the other," the needy. This is, frankly, in sharp contrast to President Bush, who seems not to be impeded by race difference (and gender difference) in his appointments and among his friends. Maybe it is just a generational thing, and, if it is that, it is also a good thing. But he may be the first president who apparently does not see individual people in racial categories or sex categories. White or black, woman or man, just as long as you're a conservative. That is also an expression of liberation from bias.

IT IS MORE than interesting that liberals have so much trouble recontextualizing race in the United States. It is, to move to the point, pathetic. And it leaves work undone. In Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's majority opinion in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger* (the Michigan affirmative action case), she wrote that the Court assumed that, in 25 years, there will no longer be a need for affirmative action. Unless things change quickly, she will be completely off the mark. Nearly two years have passed since that ruling and virtually nothing has been done to make sure that children of color—and other children, too, since the crisis in our educational system cuts across race and class—are receiving a different and better type of schooling, in science and in literacy, than those now coming into our colleges. This is not about Head Start. This is about a wholesale revamping of teaching and learning. The conservatives have their ideas, and many of them are good, such as charter schools and even vouchers. But give me a single liberal idea with some currency, even a structural notion, for transforming the elucidation of knowledge and thinking to the young. You can't.

This leaves us with the issue of U.S. power, the other leftover from the '60s. It is true: American liberals no longer believe in the axiomatic virtue of revolutions and revolutionaries. But let's face it: It's hard to get a candid conversation going about Cuba with one. The heavily documented evidence of Fidel Castro's tyranny notwithstanding, he still has a vestigial cachet among us. After all, he has survived Uncle Sam's hostility for more than 45 years. And, no, the Viet Cong didn't really exist. It was at once Ho Chi Minh's pickax and bludgeon in the south. Pose this question at an Upper West Side dinner party: What was worse, Nazism or Communism? Surely, the answer will be Nazism ... because Communism had an ideal of the good. This, despite the fact that communist revolutions and communist regimes murdered ever so many more millions of innocents and transformed the yearning of many idealists for equality into the brutal assertion of evil, a boot stamping on the human face forever.

Peter Beinart has argued, also in these pages ("A Fighting Faith," December 13, 2004), the case for a vast national and international mobilization against Islamic fanaticism and Arab terrorism. It is typologically the same people who wanted the United States to let communism triumph—in postwar Italy and Greece, in mid–cold war France and late–cold war Portugal—who object to U.S. efforts right now in the Middle East. You hear the schadenfreude in their voices—you read it in their words—at our troubles in Iraq. For months, liberals have been peddling one disaster scenario after another, one contradictory fact somehow reinforcing another, hoping now against hope that their gloomy visions will come true.

I happen to believe that they won't. This will not curb the liberal complaint. That complaint is not a matter of circumstance. It is a permanent affliction of the liberal mind. It is not a symptom; it is a condition. And it is a condition related to the desperate hopes liberals have vested in the United Nations. That is their lodestone. But the lodestone does not perform. It is not a magnet for the good. It performs the magic of the wicked. It is corrupt, it is pompous, it is shackled to tyrants and cynics. It does not recognize a genocide when the genocide is seen and understood by all. Liberalism now needs to be liberated from many of its own illusions and delusions. Let's hope we still have the strength. ■

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How liberalism came to the U.S.

Structural Flaw

BY JOHN B. JUDIS

IN THE WAKE of almost every Democratic defeat since 1972, liberals can be found insisting that, if their candidate had adhered to the party's core economic beliefs and steered clear of social issues, he would have done much better, if not won. If Democrats were to return to "the liberalism this country once heard from Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy," Princeton University sociologist Paul Starr declared in *The New York Times* last month, it would "give the Democratic party back its majority." But this electoral advice—whatever its merits—sidesteps a much more basic and disturbing question: Is it possible any longer to *enact* the kind of liberal program that Roosevelt and his successors did? In other words, even if a Democrat were elected in 2008 on a liberal platform, would he or she be able to put it into effect?

If you look at the history of liberalism, what you discover is not reassuring. From 1932 through 1974—even when Republicans Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon were president—liberals got much of their program enacted, but, since then, they have failed abysmally. In 1977, Jimmy Carter championed bills that matched almost perfectly what Starr includes in his liberal agenda—"progressive taxation, affordable health care ... environmental [and] labor protection"—but Carter failed to get any of them passed even though he had a sizable Democratic majority in Congress; in 1993 and 1994, Bill Clinton couldn't enact his signature health care measure with an almost equally large congressional majority.

It is convenient to blame these failures on incompetence, but the truth is that structural factors were more important. Liberalism's success from the '30s through the 1960s was based primarily upon certain special economic and political conditions: popular pressure from below, business' acquiescence in reform, and the conviction of the nation's opinion-makers that reform was good for America. Since then, dramatic changes in the international economy have turned business against reform and weakened the other forces supporting reform. Liberalism is by no means defunct, but it has been put on the defensive—most particularly, in this second Bush term. If Democrats want to revive liberalism, and not merely win office for themselves, they will have to address—and, where possible, rectify—the conditions that have undermined it.

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FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT WAS the first president to proclaim himself a liberal. Accepting his party's nomination in 1932, he called the Democratic Party "the bearer of liberalism and of progress." His liberalism had two crucial components. The first, derived from the British Liberals and from Bull Moose and Wilsonian progressives, was the idea of "positive government"—that a strong government was needed to regulate an increasingly unstable and inequitable capitalist system. "We recognized a deeper need—the need to find through government the instrument of our united purpose to solve for the individual the ever-rising problems of a complex civilization," Roosevelt declared in his inaugural address in January 1937. "We of the republic sensed the truth that democratic government has innate capacity to protect its people against disasters once considered inevitable, to solve problems once considered unsolvable." Roosevelt's Democratic Congresses passed the Social Security Act, the first minimum wage-law, and created the Federal Deposit Insurance Agency, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and other regulatory agencies. Roosevelt established the Public Works Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps to create jobs where the market had failed.

The second component was democratic pluralism. Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democrats had rested their hopes for political equality on the spread of economic equality through individual proprietorships, but, by the early twentieth century, industrialization had created a permanent class of wage-earners and a small class of extremely powerful businessmen and bankers. As Roosevelt, in accepting the nomination in 1936, said, "For too many of us, the political equality we once had won was meaningless in the face of economic inequality." The problem was how to restore some semblance of economic equality. One solution, of course, was socialism, but the liberals of the '30s sought instead to create what John Kenneth Galbraith later called "countervailing power" by encouraging the formation of worker and farmer organizations to balance those of business. The heart of this effort was the Wagner Act, passed by Congress in 1935, establishing a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to facilitate collective bargaining.

MOST OF THE liberal reforms that Congress adopted during Roosevelt's presidency had been circulating since the turn of the century, but they had been blocked by legislators who took their cue from business and classical economics. Enacting those reforms took more than Roosevelt's political genius. As David Plotke spelled out in *Building a Democratic Political Order*, it took an earthquake in American opinion and class relations.

During the Great Depression, conservative business leaders lost their self-confidence and their public support, while a revived labor movement and a populist upsurge put pressure for reform on Congress and the White House. At the same time, many opinion-makers—including corporate lawyers,

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economists, ministers, political leaders, writers, and a sprinkling of maverick CEOs—backed Roosevelt's liberalism as an alternative to revolutionary socialism or populism *and* as a means of lifting the country out of the Depression.

The change in economic thinking reflected the shock of the Depression. Classical economics had prescribed budget and wage cuts for an economic downturn, but the Depression had given credence to the idea that the economy was suffering primarily from what John Maynard Keynes called an absence of effective demand. American economists, labor leaders, and even some business leaders from Roosevelt's Business Advisory Council argued that government spending and collective bargaining would actually benefit the economy by stimulating demand. Their views were reflected in the language of the Wagner Act, which stated that "inequality of bargaining power ... tends to aggravate recurrent business depressions."

While Republicans later teamed with conservative Democrats to water down some of the most ambitious New Deal reform proposals, for most of the period between 1938 and 1963, liberals held their own—for instance, regularly raising the minimum wage and increasing Social Security coverage. And, from 1964 to 1974, they were able to build upon the New Deal by adopting Medicare and Medicaid and expanding the federal regulatory reach over the environment, consumer, and worker safety.

During this time, business enjoyed considerable clout in Washington, but many top business leaders, led by the pro-Keynesian Committee on Economic Development, accepted the liberal argument for Social Security and the minimum wage, and even for collective bargaining. Unions, which, until the mid-'60s, accounted for roughly one-third of the workforce, were able to keep up steady pressure for incremental reforms. And, in the late '60s, unions reluctantly joined forces with newly formed environmental and consumer groups to back the growth of new regulatory agencies.

Underlying this center-left consensus—which prevailed regardless of the party in the White House—was the widespread conviction that the New Deal and regulatory reforms were good for, or at least did no harm to, U.S. business. General Motors executives could agree with the United Auto Works to exchange labor peace for five years of rising wages because they expected that growing demand and superior productivity would protect their profit margins. Many corporate executives welcomed regulation as a way of demonstrating that their companies were good citizens. As late as 1970, a survey of Fortune 500 CEOs found 57 percent believing the federal government should "step up regulatory activities."

New Deal liberalism had been nurtured by the political economy of the Great Depression and sustained by postwar prosperity, but sometime in the mid-'60s, the U.S. and world economy entered a new phase that was not as congenial to reform. Western European and Japanese companies, having fully recovered from World War II, began to compete effectively with U.S. firms. As East Asia industrialized, the world economy began to suffer from overcapacity in steel, autos, textiles, and other key postwar industries, putting additional pressure on profits, especially in manufacturing. According to economic historian Robert Brenner, author of *The Boom and*

'Liberal' enters the American political lexicon, thanks to TNR.

In the nineteenth century, liberalism was identified with the laissez-faire policies of William Gladstone's British Liberal Party, but, in the twentieth century, liberalism came to be identified in Britain and the United States with support for government intervention in the market. As Ronald Rotunda recounts in *The Politics of Language*, The New Republic played an important role in effecting this transformation in American politics.

What we now think of as American liberalism goes back to the British Liberals and to Republican progressives. The British Whigs of the 1830s, who favored expanded suffrage, were branded "Liberals" (after the continental revolutionaries) by the opposition Tories. The term was meant to be derogatory, but it became a badge of honor rather than of shame, and the Whig Party became the Liberal Party, which espoused what would now be thought of as a laissez-faire, or libertarian, opposition to government interference in the market.

In the early twentieth century, British Liberals, competing with the Labour Party for working-class votes, adopted a "new liberalism" based upon the premise, spelled out by Liberal Party philosopher L. T. Hobhouse, that, if capitalism couldn't provide citizens with basic economic security, it had to "be secured by the deliberate action of the state." In the United States, Theodore Roosevelt and the Bull Moose Republicans adopted a similar approach, but they, like their Democratic counterparts, called their politics "progressive" and not "liberal."

When The New Republic began shifting its allegiance from Theodore Roosevelt and the Republicans to Woodrow Wilson and the Democrats in the 1916 election, it used the term "liberal" in a June editorial to describe Wilson's "preference for a governing government." That marked perhaps the first use of the term to describe a Democratic version of progressivism, and it stuck. In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt adopted the term to describe his own progressive convictions, and, in 1941, summing up his own achievements, he wrote, "I have always believed, and I have frequently stated, that my own party can succeed at the polls so long as it continues to be the party of militant liberalism." —*JBJ*

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the Bubble, average net profit margins in U.S. manufacturing fell from 24.6 percent from 1959 to 1969, to 15.5 percent from 1969 to 1979, to 13 percent from 1979 to 1990.

With their profit rates in jeopardy, businesses no longer acquiesced in unionization and new federal regulatory reforms. Businesses increasingly resorted to tactics that violated the Wagner Act. In 1957, for instance, the NLRB ordered 922 organizers reinstated for being illegally fired; in 1970, 3,779; and, in 1980, over 10,000. At the same time, corporations set up shop in Washington to lobby for deregulation and tax cuts. In 1971, only 175 businesses had registered lobbyists in Washington. By 1982, 2,445 had. Business revived old organizations, including the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), and established new ones like the Business Roundtable.

Business also joined the battle for ideas, funding new public policy groups and think tanks that issued reports, written by paid experts, arguing that government regulation and high taxes and spending were responsible for the country's economic slowdown. These ideas found a receptive audience among the country's opinion-makers. Just as the Great Depression lent credence to a Keynesian focus on effective demand, the stagflation and international competition of the '70s seemed to support classical economics and its focus on profit margins. These attitudes permeated public opinion, particularly in the late '70s. The public remained generally supportive of Social Security and Medicare, but became skeptical about taxes and regulations and any new program that appeared to be based on government expansion.

The forces favoring liberal reform had difficulty holding their own in the face of these obstacles. By 1976, the unionized labor movement had shrunk from one-third to one-quarter of the nonfarm workforce. The consumer and environmental movements could boast of a growing organizational presence in Washington, but, after the decline of the antiwar left, these movements lost the grassroots militancy that had commanded attention from the Nixon administration. Liberal reformers could call on the public to withstand challenges to the older New Deal reforms, but they lacked the clout and the public support to advance new reforms, block regressive tax cuts, or defend the narrower, more technical regulatory rules.

The test of reform under these new circumstances came during the Carter and Clinton administrations. Carter took office in January 1977 on the promise to move liberalism beyond the New Deal. But, in spite of large Democratic majorities, he failed to get any of his ambitious agenda through Congress. Business lobbies, working with Republicans and conservative Democrats, defeated labor law reform, a new consumer protection agency, and hospital cost containment. They also transformed the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill into a toothless anti-inflation measure and progressive tax reform into regressive cuts on capital gains tax rates.

Clinton took office in January 1993 after the Reagan and Bush administrations had rolled back many of the regulatory gains of the '60s and had shifted the tax burden from business to individuals. But, with a recession having soured the public on Republican economics, Clinton, like Carter, hoped to take advantage of a Democratic Congress to introduce new liberal reforms—in particular, a complicated and sophisticated national health insurance plan. But Clinton was foiled by Republican conservatives, who solicited corporate support for what activist Grover Norquist later dubbed the "center-right coalition." Even though some big businesses stood to benefit from health care reform, they either acquiesced in, or joined, the effort by health insurance companies and nonunion employers to kill Clinton's principal liberal initiative.

After the Republican victory in the 1994 congressional elections, business lobbyists were rewarded with a virtual veto over whatever Clinton tried to get through Congress. Clinton succeeded in his first term with a few liberal measures, but they were invariably those—such as the earned income tax credit or the renewal of the Clean Water Act—that did not directly challenge corporate prerogatives. Measures that corporate America opposed—such as new workplace safety regulations or a ban on striker replacements—stood no chance of passage.

MANY LIBERALS EXPECTED that the economic boom of the late '90s, like that of the mid-'60s, would revive their movement. A precipitous drop in unemployment, along with a change in leadership at the AFL-CIO, promised growth of the labor movement, which was still the main organized bastion of liberalism. But labor's prospects—and those of liberalism generally—were dimmed by additional changes in the international economy.

During the '30s and the immediate postwar decades, American businesses had little incentive to move manufacturing operations abroad, but, as competition intensified in the '60s and productivity rose internationally, businesses in the United States, Western Europe, and Japan began moving overseas in search of lower labor costs. With the growth of new investment markets in South Asia and then China—and the removal of barriers to foreign investment—the movement of manufacturing jobs abroad accelerated in the '90s. The number of foreign manufacturing affiliates jumped from 3,400 in 1961, to 200,000 in 1990, to 450,000 in 1997.

The global movement of capital created a worldwide surplus of labor that radically reduced unions' bargaining position in all the advanced industrial countries, but especially in the United States. Writes Harvard economist Dani Rodrik: "The fact that 'workers' can be more easily substituted for each other across national boundaries undermines what many conceive to be a postwar social bargain between workers and employers, under which the former would receive a steady increase in wages and benefits in return for labor peace." Concretely, this meant that manufacturing firms could credibly threaten workers that, if they were forced to recognize a union or raise wages or benefits, they

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would pick up and leave the country. In Washington, they could argue that any regulation that increased costs might induce them to bolt.

Immigration acts in 1986 and especially 1990—and a porous border—also encouraged a massive increase in legal and illegal immigration. Immigration from 1989 to 2001 was 76 percent higher than immigration from 1976 to 1988. Employers hired new immigrants with the expectation that they would be less likely than native-born workers to organize unions. For the most part, they were right. While employment in services grew rapidly, labor unions failed to organize most of these new workers. All in all, labor's hold on the workforce dropped from 35 percent in 1954, to 27.3 percent in 1970, to 23 percent in 1980, to 16.1 percent in 1990, to 13.5 percent in 2000, and to a miniscule 12.5 percent today.

This decline in labor's clout enfeebled the liberal coalition—providing for minimal gains during Clinton's second term and a string of defeats on taxes and regulations during George W. Bush's first term. Bush's only concession to liberalism was a bill strengthening securities regulation in the face of corporate scandals. And, in his second term, Bush is now tackling the heart of New Deal liberalism: Social Security. Even if he ultimately fails to privatize Social Security, Bush will have reduced liberals to fighting a rear-guard battle to preserve a program that was once deemed untouchable.

To be sure, deep divisions over race split the New Deal coalition and contributed to the decline of liberalism. So did differences over foreign policy and the Second Amendment. But, even without the civil rights revolution and the bitter debates over the cold war, liberalism still would have been undermined by structural changes in the world economy. The best evidence is Europe, which, despite having a different political culture than the United States, has been affected in a similar way by the changes in international capitalism. Even those labor or social democratic parties that have remained in office have had to preside over dismantling parts of the liberal welfare state they spent the previous decades constructing and protecting. In Germany, Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard Schröder is now weakening labor regulations that even Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats had been reluctant to disturb. The British Labour Party's Tony Blair has been forced to tinker with the country's vaunted National Health Service and public university system.

TO REVIVE LIBERALISM fully—to enjoy a period not only of liberal agitation, but of substantial reform—would probably require a national upheaval similar to what happened in the '30s and '60s. That could happen, but it doesn't appear imminent. What is more probable is a gradual move back toward the center, where older programs would be protected from assault (although not from refinement), where incremental change could be made, and where the stage could be set for a fuller revival if circumstances warranted. This could result, ironically, from the same causes that initially turned the United States away from liberalism.

In the past, the world has overcome industrial overcapacity through world wars and depressions, but with neither likely (one hopes!), the world economy is unlikely to recover its earlier brisk postwar pace. The extended U.S. boom of the late '90s, it is now clear, was a momentary spike brought about by speculation in information technology. If the economy does continue to grow sluggishly—creating greater insecurity even among the so-called investor class—it is likely that public discontent with business will rise again, as it did in the early '90s, and provide an opening for Democrats, and, through them, for liberal reform. But liberals will have to take advantage of this opening in a way that they failed to during the '90s.

Taking advantage would mean devising new approaches to domestic and international policy that are fair *and* efficient—and that don't allow the opposition to raise the specter of big government. A bloated national health insurance system could eventually be worse than none at all, but, designed properly, a national health system could widen access and keep costs under control, benefiting many businesses as well as workers. The perils of globalization can't be effectively addressed through trade protection, as some industrial unions still insist, but, by improving education, by encouraging foreign manufacturing firms to locate here, and, as economists like Rodrik have begun to argue, by international reforms that will protect workers from the vicissitudes of monetary instability.

Liberals would also have to rebuild the infrastructure of democratic pluralism through encouraging, subsidizing, and defending unions and whatever other form of countervailing social organization is feasible—from community groups to Internet-based virtual communities. The Republicans took this lesson from the older New Deal movement and have built a political infrastructure of their own while attempting to destroy what the Democrats have constructed. Liberals would have to do whatever is necessary—including, above all, tightening labor law—to rebuild their movement from below.

Liberals are not without recourse. Just as the liberals of the '30s could draw upon three decades of progressive reform plans, today's liberals can draw upon 30 years of discussion about national health insurance, environmental and consumer protection, pension reform, international trade and investment, and worker training. These policies have been featured in many campaigns, although they have frequently been overshadowed by abortion or gun control. Starr and other liberals are right to insist that they be front and center—not because, by doing so, Democrats will be guaranteed electoral success, but because, without them, the Democrats *are* simply a collection of heterogeneous interests and identities united primarily by distaste for Republican conservatism. They may win elections, but they will be totally unprepared to change America for the better. And that, after all, is what politics should be all about. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Will and Whim

IN 1988, JAPANESE NEWSPAPERS carried a story about four children who had been abandoned by their mother in a Tokyo apartment. Ranging in age from about four to fourteen, two boys and two girls, the children had managed to keep going for six months. Toward the end of that time, a neighboring girl dropped out of school and joined them. Inevitably, the group did not come through unscathed.

NOBODY KNOWS
(IFC Films)

UP AND DOWN
(Sony Pictures Classics)

It turned out that each of the original four had a different father. The mother's job that took her away from them is not specified, but with the facts of the family's background and her sudden departure, a guess is possible. Before she left, she was affectionate, yet she had no qualms about skipping off. During her absence she sent the children money—once, anyway. The report of the long abandonment has some unexplained aspects: the landlady of the apartment house, for instance, knew that the children were alone and took no action. Still, the basic facts are there and are uncanny.

Those facts fascinated a director named Hirokazu Kore-eda. More truly, he was fascinated by the children themselves. He wrote a script called **NOBODY KNOWS** that included many of the scroungy details: the stacks of unwashed dishes, the thefts from food shops, and so on. But Kore-eda chiefly wanted to know about the children—how they thought and felt and adjusted to their abandonment, which they apparently came to accept as permanent; how they willed their way along. Primarily, he wanted to live with those children—in a two-hour distillation of those six months.

Two hours, as it turns out, is a little too much. There is not much progress in the film: actions are repeated and repeated. Reportedly Kore-eda trimmed the story somewhat, and it could have used a bit more. Of course the repetition itself is part of the point, but Kore-eda could have made it with fewer recurrences. Yet the film is sustained—and, for the most part, well sustained—by the children. The four young actors, and the ultimate fifth, go through the months almost with a kind of patience. Not once does one of them cry. They play and quarrel and laugh; one of them plants seeds in flowerpots on the balcony.

As is usual with good performances by children, we are really talking about the director. Child actors—the history of film bulges with examples—can be astonishingly deft at emotional mimicry, and they are generally at their best when they are emoting heavily one way or another. These four children, plus one, don't get much chance for display, though there are some anguished moments. The astonishment here is in the fact that for most of the film the children are just living—filling up the hours and days and weeks in that apartment.

Thus, because of the stasis rather than high drama, all through the picture I admired Kore-eda. How reassuringly he must have dealt with those child actors, particularly the youngest ones. He had to earn their trust, to instill a desire in them to please him. The older boy, who was twelve at the time of the shooting, won the Cannes Festival prize last year for best male performance. Most festival prizes are not worth disagreeing with, but this one calls for comment. Yuya Yagira, the winner, has a sensitive face and is engaging and sturdy throughout. But rationally the prize should have been shared with Kore-eda. In some degree a director contributes to almost all good acting at any age, but adult actors begin with inner resources. Virtually everything in this twelve-year-old's performance had to be awakened in him by the director. This is not to say that Yagira was just obeying orders; quite the contrary. Kore-eda led him into creation of the role.

What do two truck drivers who smuggle immigrants, an ex-con who is a security guard, a young woman with a penchant for stealing babies, and an old and ailing professor have in common? A Czech film called **UP AND DOWN** burrows along in order to find out. Long ago a novelist told me that there are two ways of writing novels. One kind of author knows what his characters are going to do. The other kind (himself included, he said) writes in order to find out what the characters will do. Occasionally a film comes along that seems to be written out of comparable curiosity. In this picture several disparate stories are launched at the start, and seemingly the film was made in order to find out how they would connect.

The basics were concocted—or one might say the game was designed—by Petr Jarchovský and Jan Hrebejk. The former then organized a screenplay, and the latter directed it. Each of them did well by the other and by us. Insofar as this film explores life in the Czech Republic, it does not seem much different from earlier films about life in Czechoslovakia. Indeed, the primary flavor isn't even Czech: it can be subsumed under the nebulous rubric "European." Certainly there are American films in which things seem merely to happen rather than to click in by design; but that sort happens along more often in Europe. (*Amélie*, from France, was a relatively recent example.)

Two Czech truckers cross the border into their homeland and must quickly unload. Their freight is a group of Indian immigrants whom they have smuggled in. After the immigrants have scooted, the truckers discover that a baby has been left behind. In fairly short order the two men contrive to sell the infant to a childless woman in Prague who takes it home to be raised by her and her husband. Hubby, a security guard, discovers something that his wife had not noticed: the infant is not Caucasian.

How this situation hooks up with an old professor and his live-in lady-friend

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and his divorced wife and his adult son, and how the subject of race gets a gratifying finish—these are the junctures toward which the film spirals. The general tone is amiable, pleasing, rather than hilarious, something like old Lubitsch and Wilder pictures. *Up and Down* doesn't have the edge of those earlier films, but it's agreeable to see a picture that holds us without perspiring to do so. We are treated not as an audience but as café chums to whom a story is being told.

One oddity. Though there is no explicit sex in this film, it has a cousinly relationship to the porn that I have seen. In those films the women were almost always pretty, and some of them were gorgeous: the men were as a rule much less good-looking, and were employed only because they were indubitably male. In this Czech film all the women, young and less young, have some measure of attractiveness; all the men are masculine enough (though without physical proof), and they are all plain. I doubt that Hrebejk cast his picture by porno protocol, but I couldn't help wondering by what standards he reached the same result. ■

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The Saved and the Drowned

PRIMO LEVI, THE GREAT Jewish-Italian writer, chemist, and witness to the Holocaust, took his own life in 1987. In January 2005, which marked the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops, Sir Anthony Sher vividly resurrected him. Having first researched **PRIMO** for the Royal National Theatre in London, in collaboration with the director Richard Wilson, who joined him on his tours of the death camp, Sher has now transferred this one-man show to the Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town, where the actor was born and raised. *Primo* is Sher's own hour-and-a-half adaptation of Levi's first book, *Se questo è un uomo*, variously translated as *If This Is a Man* and *Survival in Auschwitz*, the author's lacerating account of his year in Monowitz (or Auschwitz III), and unquestionably his most powerful work.

PRIMO
(Baxter Theatre Center)

The play's program notes include a photograph of Sher lifting a pair of spectacles above his forehead, leaving a round shadow of the lens above his left eye. This is in imitation of the signature portrait of the bearded Levi squinting through that black oval like an owl through a magnifying glass. But Sher does not characterize the shy author so much as "stage his testimony," as he says, in the manner of Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*. There is little physical resemblance between the two men, and Sher, conscious of being a free, well-fed actor and not a human skeleton, does not attempt much in the way of impersonation, apart from his modest, scholarly demeanor and hesitant gait. This restraint is admirable considering the actor's usual flamboyant acting style (as in his *Tamburlaine* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*). Not a trace of fustian enters this narrative. And rather than wear what Levi calls the "comic beret" and "longstriped overcoat" of the Auschwitz prisoner, Sher, taking small uncertain steps as if confined, appears in a cardigan, shirt, and tie. The *Arbeitslager*, or work camp, is rendered by the designer Hildegard Bechtler as a bare gray setting, consisting of geometric walls and decorated with a single chair. In the intimate space of the Baxter, Levi's story is told to each of us individually, as if it were our suffering as well.

Philip Roth has written about how "this slightly built, dutiful, unassuming chemist set out systematically to remember the German hell on earth, steadfastly to think it through, and then to render it comprehensible in lucid, unpretentious prose." Unlike most other Holocaust memoirists, Levi assumes the manner of a reporter rather than a judge. He does not write about the death camps in order to formulate new accusations, but rather, using what he is later to call "the calm sober language of the witness," to provide "documentation for a quiet study of certain aspects of the human mind." In other words, Levi is applying the scientific method in which he was trained as a chemist to create an anatomy of human behavior. His purpose is to examine how people could do such things to other human beings: how an SS guard or a Kapo could hit another man without anger; how prosperous Jewish "Prominents" could turn into ravening thieves and bullies in order to survive; how in the face of such horror the social instincts can be rendered silent; how individuals can be reduced to numbers tattooed on their forearms, to "pieces" selected for extermination on the basis of age or illness, and sent off to the chimneys.

Of course, Levi's analysis is hardly detached. How could it be when he is among those "for whom history had stopped"? His prose occasionally erupts out of its measured, quasi-analytical style into an explosion of outrage and anger—like the moment when, referring to the German doctor who stares through him as if he were a fish in an aquarium, he remarks, "That look explains the great insanity of Germany." As for the sadistic assistant who wipes his greasy hands on Levi's shoulder, he thunders: "I judge him and the innumerable others like him, big and small, in Auschwitz and everywhere." (Sher adjusts this line to the more immediate "I judge *you*," staring into the void like some wounded animal, his eyes blazing with hate.)

At the same time that he catalogues the inexorable pain and cruelty of the death camp, Levi documents acts of human kindness that inexplicably appear in the midst of the brutishness—as when the Italian bricklayer Lorenzo, who knew Levi's relatives, brought him food rations every day (which Levi shared with another Italian Jew) out of "pure and uncontaminated" humanity. This "civilian" did more than feed Levi; he saved his life by reminding him that he was still a man, that there was "a just world outside our own." And remarkably, he writes in a later book (*La tregua*, translated as *The Reawakening* or *The Truce*), while he will not forgive the Germans, he does not hate them, because to hate another ethnic group is to imitate the Nazis. He is even willing to forgive

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those few Nazis who display genuine remorse—because "an enemy who sees the error of his ways ceases to be an enemy." This expiatory Christian sentiment is one very rarely expressed in Christian nations these days, the notable exception being Nelson Mandela's South Africa during the Truth and Reconciliation process.

Levi claimed that *Se questo è un uomo* was written not with any particular structure in mind, but rather as a loose collection of anecdotes of decay and ruin. His account, based on "haphazardly scribbled" notes that he took in the Lager, provides experiences of a horror that grows increasingly more inhuman. His mordant comments on the abominable motto of the camp—*Arbeit Macht Frei*—encapsulate the euphemistic genius of a people who could describe the extermination of an entire race as a "final solution." But he also provides shrewd characterizations of his fellow prisoners, which demonstrate deeply sympathetic powers of observation and a wonderful irony regarding human behavior.

Despite its desultory nature, the book, like the play, does have something of a structure. First, the entrance to the camp, followed by the process separating the healthy from the infirm, the parents from the children; second, Levi's period in Ka-Be, the ghastly infirmary where he is hospitalized first with a swollen, suppurating foot and later with scarlet fever; third, the chemistry examination he takes in order to establish that in addition to being a *Stinkjude* he is a professional who can do useful work in the laboratory; and fourth, the selection process that leads to the extermination of so many prisoners—all against the background of the smoking chimneys of Birkenau. Sher narrates Levi's vivid accounts of what it means to be a prisoner in Auschwitz—sleeping on a single straw mattress with a bony man who shoves his feet into Levi's face; holding his food bowl under his chin so as not to lose a single bread crumb; feeling the rare satisfaction of having enough soup to eat ("for a few hours we can be unhappy in the manner of free men"); witnessing the hanging of other prisoners; being saved from the final death march by an illness that normally would have sent him to the crematorium.

Yet Levi's major interest in the experience of the Lager is not physical but metaphysical. He wants to know how the soul survives in conditions that normally would extinguish all hope. He is aware that he does not have the will to resist: "I am too civilized, I think too much." And in a predictive moment of ominous reflection he becomes convinced that "I am not even alive enough to know how to kill myself."

Yet he survives the camp, knowing that the reason for his survival is not because of any special dispensation from God, but rather because of his fortuitous training as a chemist. He develops a theory (which will be the title of his last book) about "the drowned and the saved," the only opposites appropriate to a condition in which the survival of the fittest takes on a terrible new meaning. A secular Jew, Levi knows that being saved has nothing to do with being specially blessed, and when he sees a religious Jew named Kuhn praying and thanking God for not being chosen for the gas chamber, he is filled with revulsion: "Does Kuhn not understand that what happened today is an abomination, which no propitiatory prayer, no pardon, no expiation by the guilty, which nothing at all in the power of man can ever clean again? If I was God, I would spit at Kuhn's prayer."

In the recent tsunami it was not God but blind Nature that did the spitting, yet the orthodox continued to find religious justifications for why such abominations occur and why some survive them (a few rabbis even suggested that the tsunami was God's vengeance on those who did not recognize Israel). What moves Levi in the case of the Holocaust is not God's dispensatory powers but his absence. Later told by a friend that his survival had to be the work of special providence, that even though he was a non-believer he had been touched by grace, he experiences disgust at the thought that he might be alive in the place of another. As he writes in his final book, the ones most likely to survive were "the selfish, the violent, the insensitive, the collaborators of the 'gray zone,' the spies.... The worst survived, that is, the fittest; the best all died." It is typical of Levi's modesty that this virtuous man would include himself among the "worst."

Having escaped death, then, "by sheer good luck," Levi takes a long and circuitous route (described in *The Truce*) back through Eastern Europe, wandering like Ulysses through a postwar landscape. He returns to his hometown of Turin, where, miraculously, he finds his entire family still alive. He marries, has two children, finds work as a chemist, produces more books, and then, at the age of sixty-eight, inexplicably ends his life by falling down a staircase. Was this a case of survivor's guilt over being one of the saved instead of one of the drowned? Was it a result of the clinical depression that he shared with so many gifted writers of our time? Was it, as some have suggested, an accident? Assigning any single cause to this act would simplify Levi's extraordinary character and devalue his discriminating mind. All we know for certain are the facts that he wanted recorded on his gravestone: his name, his dates of birth and death, and the number tattooed on his forearm—174,516. In Levi's books, in his life, and in Sher's adaptation, that number becomes not a dehumanizing statistic but the identifying mark of a great soul. ■

The situation is dangerous,
very dangerous.
They could make a new religion.
We have enough.
A few peculiar young people will see them
and a new religion will begin.
We have enough.
Every raising of the hands
every translation into other tongues
could make a new religion.
Every descent in a white gown on steps of stone
could make a new religion.
We have enough.
Every song in a cave
every explosion
every sigh in a recess
every match lit in the dark—
they could all be turned into a new religion
in this city.
It's dangerous.
The situation is dangerous.

YEHUDA AMICHAI

—translated from the Hebrew by Leon Wieseltier

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JED PERL ON ART
Audacity

PETER PAUL RUBENS: THE DRAWINGS
(Metropolitan Museum of Art)

AMONG THE TOWERING figures of seventeenth-century art, only Rubens confounds contemporary taste. Admiration for Caravaggio, Velázquez, Vermeer, and Rembrandt has become universal ever since the realists embraced them in the nineteenth century. Poussin's astringent sensibility can feel familiar to museumgoers who admire Mondrian and accept art's essentially abstract nature. And in recent decades even casual visitors to Rome have come to recognize Bernini's warmth and humanity. Rubens, though, remains a somewhat alien figure. His work represents the most unalloyed celebration of the grand manner in all of painting, and while he has his passionate admirers among artists and historians, there is something in his boundless confidence that people can too easily mistake for kitsch.

Considering the pall that has hung over Rubens for so long, the enthusiastic response to the exhibition of his drawings currently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art comes as a happy surprise. While some museumgoers who embrace the occasionally austere power of these drawings will never respond to the opulence of Rubens's paintings, what we are seeing this winter is nothing less than the redefinition of an artistic reputation. Maybe what has happened in recent years is that all the people who, one by one, rejected a less-is-more modern sensibility and fell in love with Rubens—with his landscapes in London, or with the Marie de Médicis cycle in the Louvre—are discovering that they are not alone. **PETER PAUL RUBENS: THE DRAWINGS**, which the Metropolitan organized in collaboration with the Albertina in Vienna, occasions shocks of recognition, not only between museumgoers and drawings, but also between museumgoers. And Anne-Marie Logan, who wrote the catalogue in collaboration with Michiel C. Plomp, an associate curator at the Metropolitan, brings reserves of intelligence to this complex enterprise.

For more than half a century, artistic authenticity has tended to be associated with a quality of doubt—with Cézanne's doubt, as Merleau-Ponty put it, or with Rembrandt's, or with somebody else's. And now Rubens's refusal to doubt, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say his inability to doubt, is again being accepted as a legitimate artistic position. Rubens, who has been some people's guilty pleasure, is being reclaimed as one of art's essential possibilities. And the closer you look at Rubens, the more challenging he becomes. There are aspects of Rubens—the fervor of his color, the taste for heaped-high events—that we may be inclined to think of as Romantic or Expressionist. He is a hedonistic artist. Yet he challenges our tendency to see passion as the opposite of thought, or at least in tension with it, because his intellectualism—his scholarly approach to literary and mythological subjects, his flair for compositions with an emblematic intricacy—can be understood as another aspect of his red-hot sensualism. Delacroix, who took so much from Rubens and reflected so deeply on his achievement, praised his "audacity." And when Delacroix describes this audacity—which suggests heedlessness or even selfishness—we begin to see an artist who is in every respect the opposite of Cézanne, with his penetrating, meticulous explorations. Rubens may be the only supremely great artist without a trace of anxiety. When he embraces the dark side of experience, it is with the forthrightness of a man who is fascinated by Stoicism, which might be regarded as a dark audacity.

DRAWING, WHICH IS THE SECRET life of art, tends to illuminate the extremes of an artist's personality. In their drawings artists are not necessarily most purely themselves or most completely themselves, but they can be most nakedly themselves. In Leonardo's highly finished drawings, we feel the artist pushing at the limits of what can be rendered or what the eye can see; he seems nearly crazed by the possibilities. In Rembrandt's ink drawings, the telegraphic nature of the marks suggests divine brinksmanship. While Rubens's drawings reach summits as high as those in Leonardo and Rembrandt, he feels no need to test himself or to trump himself. Leonardo and Rembrandt, in their very different ways, seem to astonish themselves with the boldness, or the unexpectedness, of their effects. I don't have that feeling when I look at Rubens's drawings. He is at one with his gifts; he is at ease with what he can do. While his drawings certainly are astonishing, there is something matter-of-fact about them, too. They don't leave you thunderstruck. They overtake you slowly, steadily, with an enveloping atmosphere of blissful good feeling.

The exhibition at the Metropolitan is organized roughly chronologically but not entirely, and although Rubens, who was born in 1577, was already a master in his mid-twenties, museumgoers may find that they have to go through a few rooms before he really begins to work his magic. It is near the center of the show, in a section devoted to portrait drawings, many from the 1620s, that the miracles begin to multiply. In a group of portrait heads—of his first wife, Isabella Brant, and his children—Rubens unites precision and power in ways that recall earlier Northern giants such as Van Eyck and Dürer. The appetite for descriptive niceties—for strands of hair and for eyelashes and for the finest wrinkles—never becomes finicky, because each element is related to a large design. Rubens does not bear down on the details so much as take them in stride. In the portrait that Rubens drew of his son Nicolaas when the baby was around a year old—it is one of the most famous of all Old Master drawings—the sweetness of the image is chastened by the monumentality of the form. The head, with its downcast eyes and chubby cheeks and curly hair, confounds sentimentality. Rubens embraces his feelings for his son so completely that the result is a primal experience: the parent delighting in the young child's baffling beauty.

Rubens's use of color is one of the wonders of these drawings. In the head of Isabella Brant, the angled cheekbones, the fine, sharp nose, and the dimples are given a special dramatic weight

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as Rubens makes gentle love to each shape with his touches of red, black, and white chalk. And in another portrait of Nicolaas, at the age of six or seven, the adorable boy's face is topped by a capacious red felt cap, and the colored chalk adds to the luxuriance of the headgear, which is as grandiose as some of the crazily geometric hats dreamed up by Piero and Uccello. In these and other drawings, Rubens sometimes uses the three chalks literally, with red suggesting flesh, black a piece of clothing or the shadows, and white the highlights. But the colors are not always used this way, and there is sometimes an abstract play of color across the surface that tempers the coloristic literalism. The rendering of truth slips, almost imperceptibly, into a dance of the imagination. Red, black, and white are a skeletal kind of color, at once rich and austere, and it is this triumvirate—which Rubens seems to have been the first artist fully to exploit—that Watteau would later make his own. Sometimes, as in the drawing of Nicolaas in the red cap, Rubens prefigures Watteau's delicious informality, and there are other drawings in which he handles the colored chalks with an exactitude that suggests earlier Northern Renaissance artists such as Clouet and Fouquet.

In the varied styles of Rubens's drawings, and in the conviction that he brings to each type of drawing, one feels the man's commanding curiosity, as well as the flexibility of his mind. His work has none of the obsessive, fantastical quality that we know from, say, Leonardo's drawings, although there are surely sheets by Rubens in which he easily matches Leonardo's unearthly delicacy. Rubens is not one of those artists who draws in order to give vent to a tumble of ideas that he can never hope to get down in paint. He takes the workmanlike view of the place of drawing in the creative act: as a preparation for the main event, whether that is painting or sculpture. And yet his imagination is so supremely active and so adventuresome that his every graphic observation or notation or speculation takes on a mysterious largeness. He is a master of the finished portrait, but of various kinds of quick portraits as well. A profile view of Marie de Médicis—for whom he created the cycle of paintings that is a royal fanfare expanded to epic proportions—has an invigorating candor. And in a late and very informal self-portrait, Rubens's eyes are restless, beseeching, so that we feel as if we are in the presence of a man's wide-eyed acceptance of his own mortality.

There is very little that Rubens cannot do. His landscape drawings, which suggest a passionate attachment to the vignettes and the vistas that he discovered as he surveyed his country estate, are landmarks in our understanding of the natural world. And in a study of a congregation gathered to hear a preacher, Rubens responds to the ramshackle ordinariness with an immediacy that brings Rembrandt to mind. Time and again, we encounter drawings in which pictorial experience becomes a dimension of life experience.

One of the high points of this exhibition is a sheet that contains a group of quick pen-and-ink studies for the *Flemish Kermis* in the Louvre, that vision of reeling, careening dancing couples. On the side of the sheet that is exhibited here, Rubens unfurls his playful pairings, one duo after the other, until the very sheet of paper, full of whirling dancers, shivers and vibrates before our eyes. Here movement is experienced not as an accretion of innumerable, discrete muscular actions but as a thrusting of spiraling arms, legs, and torsos that send waves of energy across the page. Each of Rubens's couples is a fabulous construction of twisting, spiraling lines, and he complicates the game by linking his figures not only at their hands and their waists but at their lips as well. Looking over the sheet, with its heaped-high possibilities, is very close to the experience of watching great dancers in performance, because just when you think that there is no other way for two people to combine their legs and their arms, they find another way—and thereby take you deeper into the complexities of their feelings. The arching rhythms of the figures in this drawing are surely grounded in the geometricization of the figure in the art of the Renaissance, but Rubens brings to the swinging arcs of Raphael and Leonardo a new, hell-bent improvisational power.

Rubens's relationship with the masters of the High Renaissance was extraordinarily intense. He found himself as he found his way into their work, and their attitudes about drawing were an essential part of what he absorbed. For Rubens, as for the other key figures of the Baroque, among them Caravaggio and Bernini and Velázquez, the central artists of the High Renaissance were fully dimensional men, with careers and achievements and personalities and ideas that had been documented to an extent hitherto unheard of in European art. Michelangelo and Raphael and Titian had been free to invent their own Great Tradition, which they based on the studio practice of their youth, and clothed in fragmentary, generally apocryphal stories of the painters and sculptors of the classical past.

For Rubens, who spent eight years in Italy at the very beginning of the seventeenth century, when Michelangelo and Titian had been dead for only a few decades, the Great Tradition was an established fact. His eagerness to honor what by his day was recognized as Michelangelo's essential place in the graphic traditions of the West is reflected in his early drawings after Michelangelo's *Libyan Sibyl* and after the *Belvedere Torso*, the Hellenistic marble from which Michelangelo derived so many key images. Ultimately, Rubens was perhaps the only Baroque master who felt equally the impact of Michelangelo and Titian, but in his early years in Italy, although he was acquainted with Titian's work, Michelangelo was the great discovery. Rubens absorbed the lessons of these two fathers one after the other, and finally it was Titian's example—especially the Titians that he studied and copied in Spain in 1628—that he made most fully his own.

Rubens's relationship with Michelangelo is in many respects a study in the attraction of opposites. The musculature that in Michelangelo's drawings can be so heavily worked that it suggests a magnificent imprisonment is remobilized through Rubens's easier stroke. Rubens turns Michelangelo's dreamy youths, for whom physicality is almost a burden, into red-blooded heroes. And in doing so, Rubens suggests a side of Michelangelo—an impassioned carnality—that many of his admirers had overlooked. In Michelangelo's own lifetime, the Mannerists had mostly responded to his aestheticism, to his sense of the figure as an exquisite conundrum. In Rubens's day, Annibale Carracci had turned Michelangelo's vision of the figure into something imposing and inhuman. (Annibale's Farnese ceiling is an academic position paper on Michelangelo with elements of jokey shop talk mixed in.) It is true that

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Caravaggio sought a more human understanding of Michelangelo's men, but he could do so only by robbing them of their heroicism, by turning them into sly, streetwise seducers. As for Bernini, his attitude toward Michelangelo is perhaps closer to Rubens's than that of any other Baroque artist, although what Bernini ultimately took from Michelangelo was the virility of his architectural vision rather than his feeling for the human form.

For Michelangelo, the beautiful young man was a classical vessel that might contain a Christian spirit. Rubens understood this, and in his own infinitely more optimistic way he made this vision his own. In several drawings included in the Metropolitan show—one is a study of a young man's torso and raised arms that Rubens used for a painting of *The Raising of the Cross* and the other is a study for *Daniel in the Lions' Den*—Rubens revisits the sheer bulk of Michelangelesque musculature, and he gives that musculature a quickening drama without robbing it of its push toward the ideal. Rubens's high-spirited response to Michelangelo's spiritual suffering mines possibilities that are implicit in the older artist's taste for brooding, saturnine Hellenistic figures. In Michelangelo's mature work, the massive shoulders, strong backs, and tensed abdomens are earthbound; they are coarsely beautiful facts. Rubens opens up the torsos and the shoulders that weigh Michelangelo's figures down. In Rubens's study for *The Raising of the Cross*, the shoulders spring heavenward to support the expansive gesture of the arms. And in place of Michelangelo's clouded, blank-eyed youth, Rubens offers an easy, transparent physiognomy.

It is a measure of Rubens's audacity that this artist who re-imagined the painterly traditions of Venice should have made such a close study of Michelangelo, that harsh critic of Venetian colorism. Of course Titian himself, in his mature work, often aimed to incorporate Michelangelo's coiling physicality into his own vision of sumptuous color. And if Rubens looked to Michelangelo to help him shape the new, more direct emotional character of a Counter-Reformation art, it was the affinity with Titian that absorbed him in his later, often most personal compositions. Rubens was, like Titian, a man who was thoroughly at ease in the world. He knew how to run a studio and manage complex commissions, even as he somehow simultaneously pursued his own increasingly idiosyncratic vision. And the more Rubens found himself as an artist, the more he found his way into Titian's world. By the time of the Marie de Médicis cycle in the early 1620s—and increasingly up until his death in 1640—Rubens was seeing color not as volume delimited by contour, but as an emotion-laden suffusion of hue that envelops the form and almost marinates the figure.

THE EXHIBITION AT THE METROPOLITAN concludes with a room that gathers together a number of works related to *The Garden of Love*, the whirligig of a painting in which Rubens embraces the pastoral spirit of Titian and Giorgione. This final gallery is in many respects also a salute to Helena Fourment, the young woman whom Rubens married after the death of Isabella Brant, when he was fifty-three and she was sixteen, and with whom he had five children. Their May-December alliance still leaves some

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people feeling uncomfortable. We have no way of knowing what Helena actually felt. But the woman who emerges in Rubens's paintings, whether a mother with her children or a young beauty with her ardent lover, is so tenderly, so keenly imagined that one can only say that if Helena was in fact unfulfilled, then Rubens was surely the greatest prevaricator who ever picked up a brush.

By no means all the women whom we see in this last room are Helena. The luminous study for a head of a very grown-up Saint Apollonia, a composition that is not so much drawn as it is lightly breathed across the page, was done in 1628, when Helena was only fourteen. But Helena's ripe blondness—and the mingling in her demeanor of something earthy and something naturally aristocratic—was clearly Rubens's ideal, and it is Helena who gives *The Garden of Love* and the related drawings their mood of rambunctious yet silken eroticism. *The Garden of Love*—with young women conversing near a splashing fountain, where they are joined by eager young men—is an erotic pastoral, a variation on a theme that dates back to the tapestried allegories of the Middle Ages, a variation that for Rubens has a ripely autobiographical meaning.

The Garden of Love contains one of the great images in the history of art. At the left of the canvas, we see a young man beseeching a young woman to come with him into the garden, as a cupid gives her a friendly shove. Rubens joins these three figures into a singular form, a form that is at once man and woman and child—and this suggests a thrilling union of masculinity and femininity, but also of mind and body, of thought and action, of love and passion. In a drawing of this couple that is included in the Metropolitan show, the woman is a barely elaborated profile, and Rubens focuses on the young man's head, juxtaposing his sensuous lips and pleading eyes with the ghostly female presence. And in doing so he comes as close as anybody ever has to expressing a man's baffled, impassioned seduction of a fascinating, elusive woman. In the painting—and in a drawing that is also included here, which is a preparation for a woodcut based on the canvas—the great volume of the woman's dress dominates, and we see only the man's head and arms, so that what we have is almost a two-headed figure, with, again, the cupid pushing from behind. The man and the woman have already, in some sense, become one—their bodies certainly are one—but their heads, their minds, their consciousnesses remain separate. And there is another conflict as well, between the cupid (who is brash, silly, sensuous, with only one thing on his mind) and the young lovers (who are full of scruple, spirit, complexity).

COURTESY METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

PETER PAUL RUBENS, *Young Man Embracing a Young Woman*, circa 1631–1632

Julius Held, in his book on Rubens's drawings, makes a fascinating iconographical observation about the drawing in which the young man pleads with his enigmatic lover. He points out that early in his career Rubens had copied some images from Holbein's *Dance of Death*, one of which represents an elegantly dressed couple regarding a skeleton that is beating a drum. The relationship of the man's and woman's heads in Rubens's study after Holbein—with the man behind the woman and the woman in profile—is very close to this drawing for *The Garden of Love*. And it may be that it was some memory of that couple confronting death that gave Rubens the key to this unforgettable image of a couple confronting love. If, in Rubens's drawing, the erotic possibilities are complicated—are crowned, almost—by the workings of the human imagination, who can doubt that the awareness of death is a sort of shadow here, a dark tint in the remotest corners of the lovers' minds? It is in this subtly shaded vision of human happiness that *The Garden of Love* looks forward to the forever engaging and disengaging and reengaging couples in Watteau's paintings. And of course Rubens is also looking back to Titian, the only Renaissance master who painted men and women who were capable of exploring, with their minds as well as their bodies, a range of erotic possibilities.

By comparison with *The Garden of Love*, Titian's greatest studies of the art of love, especially *Venus and Adonis* and the *Nymph and Shepherd*, are positively succinct. Where Titian offers us a pair of lovers, Rubens must have a bevy, a mob. Indeed, some of Rubens's compositions can make even Titian's most elaborate inventions—the *Assumption* in the Frari or the *Presentation of the Virgin*—look straightforward. This difference points to an essential shift that took place between the High Renaissance and the Baroque. When you turn back from Rubens, the crowning figure of the High Baroque, to such masters of the High Renaissance as Titian and Michelangelo, you realize how much the Renaissance artists remained attached to the logic of narrative, the simplicity of storytelling, which they knew from Giotto and from Byzantium.

The difference must be insisted upon. For only when we begin to accept Rubens's extravagance as a momentous choice can we see that his desire always to add something more—to put in more figures, more curves, more colors, more sparkling effects—is his utterly original response to the exhilarating possibilities of the Renaissance. Rubens takes the Renaissance idea of the painting as an internally coherent, and consistent, and *reasonable* world, and begins to apply his own pressure to the idea. He makes that

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world spin and whirl and sometimes explode. He sees the lessons of the Renaissance as an education in stagecraft, and he is tickled by all the possible ways in which a painting can be staged.

Of course the idea of painting as stagecraft is the key to much Baroque art. Poussin also sees the painting as an elaborately produced event. But with Poussin, it is the seamlessness of stagecraft that is emphasized, the sense of the whole world as composed of a single substance, which is paint. For Rubens, stagecraft is a far riskier business. In his drawings you see how varied his preparations can be. He considers the big abstract movements, but he also thinks about the look of a face, the shimmer of a dress, the pull of a muscle, the sweetness of a landscape. He exults in the cacophonous possibilities of this painted theater; he is interested in naturalistic truth, but also in high drama, in magic, even in melodrama. He likes to push each part of the painting to its own boiling point. His fierce curiosity and his attentiveness take him in many directions. In one of his journal entries, Delacroix mentions Rubens and Rossini almost in the same breath, and the connection is telling, because Rubens's art has some of the qualities that we know from opera. Like the composer, Rubens is unafraid of a heterogeneous form, of an art that combines elements of lyric power, historical drama, narrative intensity, local color, and psychological portraiture. He knows that the results may be as messy as they are provocative—but he is willing to take a gamble.

Rubens wants to do it all. If some of his paintings have an overstuffed quality—a quality that occasionally suggests camp—this has everything to do with his awareness of how much there is in life that needs to be expressed. In Rubens's work there is a friction, a heaving power, a sense of parts that will not sit still, that will not stay in place. He embraces the unevenness of life—its tangle of pressures—and he knows how exhilarating this can be. Even as Rubens is stage-managing his visions, he is allowing those visions to take on a life of their own. ■

Stephen Holmes

Dismal Precedents

PERILOUS TIMES:
FREE SPEECH IN WARTIME FROM THE SEDITION ACT OF 1798 TO THE WAR ON TERRORISM
By Geoffrey R. Stone
(W. W. Norton, 730 pp., $35)

I.

TO HELP US GROPE OUR WAY through the perilous present, Geoffrey R. Stone, a leading authority on the First Amendment, has produced a rich and readable overview of America's curtailment of civil liberties in wartime. He focuses primarily, but not exclusively, on restrictions of freedom of speech, examining in engrossing detail six historical episodes: the Sedition Act of 1798, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Cold War, and Vietnam. He appends a brief discussion of civil liberties after September 11, but his real contribution to the study of the ongoing war on terror is this book as a whole. For each episode, as Stone retells it, speaks in one way or another to painful issues of the present day. His general conclusion is that "the United States has a long and unfortunate history of overreacting to the perceived dangers of wartime." He hopes that a bit of self-knowledge will inspire us to do better this time around.

Political dissent has been criminalized in the United States only when foreign powers have threatened our national security. This exception implies, disturbingly yet understandably, that the United States has two constitutions, one for peace and one for war. Since our enemies will not always fight by the book, it would be suicidal to insist that our leaders adhere punctiliously to pre-established rules when reacting to foreign threats: the executive's discretionary power to respond flexibly to unpredictable attacks is justified. But it is also dangerous. Its potential for abuse became apparent as early as the sedition trials at the end of the eighteenth century, which is where Stone begins his story. The incumbent Federalist Party used the threat of war with France as a pretext to discredit its Republican rival in the run-up to the election of 1800. Trumping up an alarm of danger, as their adversaries vividly charged, the ruling Federalists treated pungent criticisms of President John Adams as if they were treasonable assaults on the very nation.

Historical precedents for wartime abuse of executive power are simultaneously reassuring and unsettling. On the one hand, they suggest that we have survived bouts of unconstitutionality before. On the other hand, they imply that deviations from the Constitution are just what we should expect. Writing as a historian, Stone aims to explain how legal doctrines and practices have buckled under the pressure of violent political events. But he never lets post–September 11 America drift far out of sight. In his first chapter, for instance, he reminds us that the incumbent Federalists, between 1798 and 1800, relentlessly accused their partisan rivals of underestimating the foremost foreign menace and even, as closet Jacobins, of being ready to hand their country over to the French. At the time, admittedly, the judiciary was stacked with judges belonging to the president's party, and they cooperated readily in the campaign to shut down opposition newspapers and to choke off criticisms of the administration and its policies. So the intriguing analogy to the present remains to some extent imperfect.

Imperfect, but still illuminating. The Alien and Sedition Crisis is not our crisis, but it reminds us helpfully that we are far from being the first Americans to interpret foreign dangers through the distorting prism of party politics. Indeed, this seems to be the rule rather than the exception. When severely criticized by partisan rivals, previous incumbents, too, have inflated foreign threats and invoked the honor of the troops in the field in order to silence embarrassing criticisms of administration policy. Not war only, but even the threat of war, may entice a sitting president into slurring opposition politicians with intimations of disloyalty. Citing foreign dangers as a pretext to silence domestic competitors may have unfortunate consequences for the nation—not only may an alleged threat, upon inspection, prove to be

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exaggerated or imaginary, but, as rudimentary First Amendment theory instructs, censorship also stupefies the citizenry. Albert Gallatin, leader of the House Republicans at the time, was an early and spirited proponent of this view. He remarked, in response to the sedition trials, that clampdowns on freedom of speech and the press "prevent the diffusion of knowledge" and "throw a veil on the folly" and the "crimes" of the government. The outlawing of dissent, whatever the excuse, undercuts public reason as well as private rights.

Formulated differently, the curtailment of freedom of speech and the press under the threat of foreign war weakens the country by depriving citizens of their inalienable right to examine and to judge their government. A more grievous injury to the Constitution is difficult to imagine, for this political right is the guardian of all private rights. The issues involved here are ramifyingly complex. But already in his first chapter Stone dispels a basic confusion afflicting contemporary discussions. Others have expressed discomfort with the notion that the war on terror requires us to sacrifice liberty for security: the alleged causal relation between reduced liberty and increased security seems highly speculative, for one thing. But Stone, because he is focusing on the First Amendment, takes this objection a step further. How much sense does it make, he implicitly asks, to sacrifice the critical understanding of government action for the sake of security? To redescribe the proposed trade-off in these striking terms is to draw much-needed attention to the potential, not to say actual, conflict between the interests of today's incumbents and the interests of the country as a whole.

II.

ONLY AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, in the celebrated case of *Ex parte Milligan* in 1866, did the Supreme Court deny that the government could resort to military commissions on American territory to try alleged civilian conspirators during war or rebellion when the ordinary courts were open and functioning. Writing for the majority, Justice David Davis famously declared that the Constitution is the law of the land "equally in war and in peace," and that "the great exigencies of government" do not free the executive branch from "any of its provisions." The Bill of Rights, in other words, is not "silent among arms."

This is an inspiring piece of idealism, often cited by opponents of the Bush administration's resort to military tribunals. But as Stone shows, it is somewhat misleading as a statement of fact. Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus, for instance, carried out in open defiance of Chief Justice Roger Taney, would have been unthinkable in peacetime. It was one of the principal measures his partisan opponents cited when accusing him of trying to dismantle traditional American liberties. And Lincoln, for his part, manifestly believed that the letter of the Constitution could be violated in a state of emergency, though not in ordinary times, to preserve the Union and the safety of the people. Among the practices that he explicitly approved was trial by military commissions of civilians accused of "discouraging voluntary enlistments," that is, of seriously weakening the Union's capacity to preserve itself militarily.

THE MOST RABID CONFLICTS over freedom of expression in American history, Stone's book suggests, arose in the context of drafting soldiers for dangerous service in controversial wars. This is perfectly natural, since military conscription tests the outer limits of liberalism. The liberalism of individual rights and due process of law is invariably weakened by the collective discipline and discretionary authority of wartime mobilization. War allows the government to sacrifice the lives of individual conscripts for the sake of group security as defined by the party that happens to be wielding political power. After a war is declared, those who do not believe that the alleged threat is sufficiently grave and imminent to warrant the deployment of military force are not granted footloose freedom to withhold their participation. They are instead compelled to bend their private wills to the incumbent's interpretation of the danger at hand.

This potentially fatal subordination of individual lives to collective purposes, defined by the officeholders of the moment, has deep, even primordial origins. The drill and discipline of its military, that is, the "constitution" of the force that protects inhabitants from foreign predators and marauders, is fundamental to the survival of any society. And the first rule of such an Ur-constitution is the right of the military leadership to execute deserters. Without such a power, it was long believed, no army could be maintained in the field; and whoever wills the end must will the means.

But is censorship of political speech a necessary and permissible means to raising armies and keeping them afoot? Communications between Lincoln and his distant military commanders were slow and sporadic. Thus, as Stone emphasizes, Lincoln's officers sometimes acted on their own initiative without the president's foreknowledge. At various points, they forced opposition newspapers to close, and they inflicted criminal punishments on critics of the president and the war. Attempting to justify the silencing of anti-draft publicists, a repressive measure of which he did not necessarily approve, Lincoln asked memorably: "Must I shoot the simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert?" The underlying logic here draws attention to the tight connection, which resurfaces in Stone's accounts of World War I and Vietnam, between restrictions on freedom of speech and the greatest of all "infringements" of civilian liberty, namely, the compulsory consignment of young male citizens to the slaughterhouse of battle.

As the Civil War's death toll soared, enrollment officers were harassed and even murdered, and anti-draft riots spread across the North. All this cried out for a forceful response. Even before the Emancipation Proclamation, antiwar sentiment was closely associated with racism. Opponents of the draft acrimoniously inquired: why should white boys be forced to die for the freedom of blacks who will afterward move north to steal white jobs? Thousands of allegedly disloyal individuals residing within the Union were taken briefly into military custody for inciting rebellion and expressing sympathy with the Confederacy. At stake, however, was not merely freedom of speech or the government's authority to silence those who publicly cast doubt on the justice of the Union cause. The issue was more basic and cut deeper: what sort of constitutional limits can and should be placed on the incumbent president's right to decide that a given threat is so grave and imminent that thousands of conscripts must lose their lives to beat it back?

An additional point should be made about habeas corpus. That Lincoln suspended the writ is less interesting, from today's perspective, than his reasons for

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doing so. The Union cause was seriously jeopardized, Stone explains, by disorder and opposition in the border states abutting the nation's capital, especially in Maryland. The Constitution provides for the right, during invasions or rebellions, to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, whereby the executive branch is ordinarily compelled to explain before an independent judge its grounds for holding a prisoner. (Whether the right to suspend the writ belongs to the president or to Congress has been a matter of dispute.) Insurrectionary activity in Maryland, including bridge-burning, was putting at risk transportation links between Washington, D.C. and the North. After murderous clashes between Union troops and Baltimore mobs, Lincoln suspended habeas corpus, reasoning that the government was faced not with hundreds of ordinary crimes, but rather with mass rebellion. As Stone paraphrases the position of Lincoln's supporters: "the rebellion involved treasonable activity on so vast a scale that the ordinary criminal process was simply inadequate to deal with the situation."

Yes, the courts were still open; but they would not have been able to handle large numbers of rioters. Moreover, conditions of rebellion did not lend themselves to the gathering of evidence or the taking of testimony, let alone conviction by a jury drawn from the accused's own state and district as the Sixth Amendment requires. If rioters were brought before civilian judges, they would in all likelihood have been released, only to replenish the rebellion. Lincoln justified his decision, therefore, by arguing that "men may be held in custody whom the courts, acting on ordinary rules, would discharge," especially if they are freed a few months later when the momentary danger has passed.

It is again worth stepping back to ask what light this historical episode might cast upon the current war on terror. Lincoln's thinking differs instructively from the reasoning of Bush's apologists and lawyers today. The latter typically argue that ordinary due-process rules can be suspended in cases such as that of Jose Padilla, the alleged dirty bomber. He is no ordinary criminal, they stipulate, but rather an unlawful combatant in an unprecedented global conflict. But Lincoln contrasted ordinary crime not to a clandestine war but to an open rebellion. This makes a difference. In a technical legal sense, not worth discussing here, Bush did not actually suspend habeas corpus in Padilla's case; but he did so for all practical purposes. In any case, Bush's attorneys worked hard to deny Padilla his constitutional right to due process. But they could not, like Lincoln, claim that the sheer number of potentially treasonous offenders was soon likely to exceed what ordinary courts could process. They could not honestly cite as a precedent Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus to safeguard the transport of Union troops through territory verging on rebellion. Rioters taken into custody during (in Lincoln's words) "sudden and extensive uprisings against the Government" could easily have overtaxed the criminal justice system. The same cannot be said about the one or two American suspects kept by Bush out of ordinary civilian courts.

III.

Stone labels the Sedition Act of 1918 "the most repressive legislation in American history." It outlawed "conspiracy to publish disloyal material intended to obstruct the war and cause contempt for the government of the United States." This draconian legislation was, as Stone's reader will now expect, a product of war and the intense emotional identifications spawned by life-and-death struggles between political communities. Woodrow Wilson dealt harshly with what he called "the poison of disloyalty." Since they were allegedly promoting contempt for the government and disaffection among the troops, antiwar groups had to be silenced. Healthy or harmless in peacetime, political disagreements among Americans had to be quashed lest they boost the morale of foreign foes.

Censorship may be a perfectly sincere expression of respect. To gag speakers is to acknowledge that speech is powerful, that a single word may kindle an all-engulfing flame. Calls for a general strike might conceivably have been taken up, disabling the American war machine. With such apprehensions in mind, the government prosecuted and convicted Eugene V. Debs for publicly stating, among other things, that the rich were shipping poor soldiers to their deaths for crass commercial gain. One unfortunate film-maker was sentenced to ten years in prison for accurately portraying British brutality toward Americans during the Revolutionary War and thereby presumably jeopardizing America's World War I

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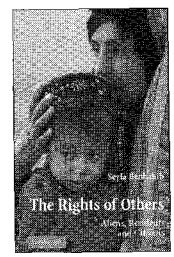

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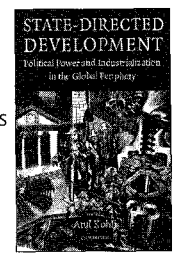

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alliance with Great Britain. The bare mention of war profiteering was considered tantamount to treason. Many who denied that Germany's submarine warfare against England posed a grave threat to American security, as Stone mentions, were of German or Irish ancestry. That is to say, political disagreements about the imminence and the gravity of a foreign threat expressed underlying ethnic cleavages. This dispute was resolved in the usual manner: the holders of public office prevailed.

Judges, including two of the most distinguished justices on the Supreme Court, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis D. Brandeis, at first acquiesced in Wilson's personal intolerance for criticism and proclivity for repressive solutions. They produced, in their wartime decisions, what Stone calls "dismal precedents that took the nation half a century to overcome." In one famous case, on behalf of a unanimous Supreme Court, Holmes wrote that the First Amendment creates no constitutional right to say anything that encourages mutiny, hinders the war effort, or impedes the raising of armies. Such holdings were not exactly monuments to liberalism.

But neither were they gross anomalies. In wartime, judges have a hard time balancing individual rights against government interests. They are unfavorably positioned to second-guess the executive's diagnosis of government interests under emergency conditions. They lack independent sources of information to help them verify or falsify the executive's assessment of foreign threats. How can they possibly decide if allegations of military necessity are valid or not? Moreover, as William O. Douglas later wrote of the American judiciary, "Its members are very much a part of the community and know the fears, anxieties, craving and wishes of their neighbors." Stone clearly disapproves of this dim view of judges, even though nothing in his book suggests that it is especially inaccurate.

AT THE GREAT WAR'S END, the fears and the anxieties of ordinary Americans abated, and, presumably as a result, the Supreme Court slowly began to shift course. After the storm had passed, Holmes and Brandeis caught their breath and, in influential dissents, laid the foundations for the robustly liberal First Amendment jurisprudence that Stone himself celebrates. The "clear and present danger" test, associated with Holmes, eventually made it more difficult for the government to silence political speech. Stone's behind-the-scenes account of how this standard developed is one of the highlights of the book and, indeed, one of the most intriguing tales of unintended innovation in American legal history.

If judges failed to moderate the executive branch's oppressive reflexes while World War I was still ongoing, the public at large proved less honorable still. When youngsters are dying in war, as Stone explains, many people back home are emotionally compelled to believe that the sacrifice must be worth it. They favor restrictions on freedom of speech not so much because they think that antiwar agitation is actually impeding the war effort, but simply because, in such a stressful period, they cannot tolerate, for psychological reasons, the grating sound of dissonant voices.

In peacetime, democracy encourages law-abiding behavior not by coercively suppressing frustrations but rather by guiding them into officially sponsored channels, allowing citizens to campaign for the repeal of unpopular laws. But the civilized possibility of peacefully amending odious laws rather than disruptively violating them is difficult to sustain under the pressures of war. During World War I, Stone contends, jury members, with sons perhaps at the front, had little patience for the distinction between antiwar speech calling for legislative change and antiwar speech calling for disobeying the law. Aflame with nationalist zeal, juries regularly found antiwar agitators who had called for a perfectly legal change of policy guilty of sedition, that is, of acting with malicious intent and with the likely effect of obstructing the raising of armies and the defense of the nation. During an existential conflict with a lethal enemy, in other words, ordinary citizens may be no more likely than robed judges to act as reliable guardians of the Constitution. That at least would explain why the right to criticize incumbents and agitate for change has proved relatively easy to abridge in times of war.

IV.

FRANCIS BIDDLE THOUGHT ALONG similar lines. In an arresting phrase, he wrote that "the Constitution has never greatly bothered any wartime President." As Roosevelt's attorney general between 1941 and 1945, Biddle was in a good position to know. The most glaring violation of constitutional principles under FDR was undoubtedly the mass internment of more than one hundred thousand ethnic Japanese, citizens as well as resident aliens, undertaken (like the recent internments in Guantánamo) without any individualized findings of guilt. And what was the official justification for such a sweeping measure? It was that the United States must relocate all persons of Japanese origin away from the West Coast, an area where certain defense industries were located, because government officials did not possess sufficient linguistic or cultural knowledge to discriminate accurately between innocent and guilty members of the group. This is the same logic with which we are regaled today; namely, our lack of skills justifies their loss of rights.

According to Stone, political and even partisan factors played a considerable role in Roosevelt's decision to approve the wholesale evacuation against the advice of J. Edgar Hoover, among others, who insisted that his agents had the situation fully under control. Roosevelt wanted to focus early American war efforts on Europe, and may have therefore allowed what Justice Frank Murphy (one of Stone's judicial heroes) called a "legalization of racism" in order to vent anti-Japanese feeling without diverting military resources to the Pacific. Similarly, the numbers and the political clout of Italian-Americans and German-Americans, and not merely their geographical dispersal away from a militarily vulnerable coastline, help explain why they, in turn, were not relocated en masse. Japanese-Americans may have been singled out less because they were dangerous than because they were weak. Their appalling internment, Stone adds, received some measure of public support on racist grounds, because the internees were non-white.

The implicit comparisons between this episode during World War II and certain notorious events in the contemporary war on terror are again eye-catching, so much so that Stone feels little need to dwell on them or even to discuss them explicitly. In any war or emergency situation, the executive branch has a strong incentive to represent itself to the public as highly effective. Incumbents can even convince themselves that exaggerations in this respect are selflessly patriotic,

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because the mere reputation of effectiveness may dishearten the enemy and embolden one's own forces. One consequence of this need to appear effectual is that innocent detainees, interned by mistake, may not be released promptly when the government discovers that it has erred. Their exculpation and discharge, after all, would expose the incompetence and the slipshod screening procedures of the arresting authority. For the sake of appearances, therefore, wrongfully detained individuals may well be held in custody until a politically opportune moment (until, say, presidential elections are over).

This, Stone indicates, may have been what happened to the interned Japanese-Americans. Roosevelt was advised already in 1943 that these detentions did nothing to increase America's security. But he did not release the detainees until after the election of 1944. If Franklin Delano Roosevelt behaved this way, what can we expect from George W. Bush? Has the current administration, too, unconscionably prolonged the incarceration of guiltless captives simply to shield itself from public embarrassment? The very possibility reminds us that appallingly unprincipled motives can easily steal into public policy under the carte blanche of wartime secrecy.

V.

ALTHOUGH IT COMES LATE IN Stone's story, the Cold War turns out to be, in his account, "perhaps the most repressive period in American history." Such a recent violation of the basic liberties of American citizens, it should be said, challenges the widespread belief that our constitutional liberties are somehow destined to expand. This expectation of progress is so strong that it even appears fleetingly in Stone's own account. But the past that he surveys provides liberals with no assurances about the resiliency of the American constitutional order in the face of danger, real or alleged, from abroad.

During the early 1950s, the beliefs and the associations of American citizens were monitored by a network of domestic spies and informers. The roots of this nightmarish development remain mysterious to some extent. Popular support for repressive government, at the time, may have derived in part from an intense psychological stress, similar to today's, caused by the stark incongruity between immense American power and inescapable American vulnerability. After World War II, nuclear weapons and long-distance missile technology obliterated America's comforting geographical isolation from the world's violence and turmoil. This end of insularity, we might speculate, could have been sufficiently disorienting, psychologically and emotionally, to excite a popular yearning for scapegoats. And stoking the climate of anxiety was a fear—not a baseless one—that America's principal foreign enemy had domestic followers and fellow travelers. Many suspicions of Soviet espionage and subversion were illusory, even hallucinatory, but by no means all; and some have since been confirmed.

The interesting point here is that the early 1950s witnessed a much more thorough and pernicious blurring of the home front and the foreign front than anything we have seen since September 11. Stone's recounting of the early Cold War period, therefore, provides an important reality check for fearful liberals today. At that time, progressives were not accused simply of being weak on defense. They were also charged, very much like the Republicans during the Alien and Sedition Crisis, with being treasonous collaborators with the country's mortal enemy. Even by today's uncivil standards, the levels of vituperation at the time were extraordinary. So why the difference?

American territory today may host a handful of sleeper cells, but our party politics has not yet been poisoned by a generalized fear of a "fifth column" or an "enemy within" of the sort exploited by red-baiters during the Cold War era. The partisan hijacking of the current war on terror is inexcusable. And the rhetorical smearing of some Democratic candidates last year was at times unbelievable. But none of this, as Stone's history reminds us, has yet reached the self-destructive and fanatical extremes of the McCarthyite exploitation of America's confrontation with communism.

STONE TURNS FINALLY TO THE Vietnam War, a period that he experienced first-hand. Parallels to the present again swarm through his account. Examples include the American government's confident predictions of an American "victory" in a distant counterinsurgency and American plans to strengthen the South Vietnamese military and then withdraw. Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon both invoked national security to limit the right of the electorate to know what was being done in its name. Both coded criticism as enmity, craved unswerving loyalty, and careened forward without a plan. Nixon even presided over a secret government within the government. Among their other antics, members of his inner circle placed backroom pressure on news executives to toe the administration line. Setting an example for subsequent public-private partnerships in this domain, they had the FBI recruit right-wing newspapers to smear critics of the war. As Stone remarks, "If direct censorship was no longer available to silence critics, secrecy, deceit and half-truths still remained effective weapons in the government's propaganda arsenal."

So much for the government. What about the opposition? The most striking thing about the antiwar movement, as Stone suggests, is how long it took to get under way, that is to say, how difficult it

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was to make the general public bring into focus the hellish violence that the American military was perpetrating abroad, in a war launched on a dubious theory and conducted on the basis of shoddy intelligence. As Justice Brandeis said, in a passage cited elsewhere by Stone, "an inert people" is the greatest enemy of freedom.

THE DEBATABLE BUT INTRIGUING analogy between the Vietnam War and the Iraq war raises the following question: why does the American public seem so blankly unconcerned with what our troops have wrought at Abu Ghraib or in Fallujah? We hear some grumblings about the "backdoor draft" affecting fellow Americans. But popular attitudes toward Iraqi suffering, with some exceptions, seem characterized by either dimmed awareness or flat denial. Government infringements of freedom of speech cannot be blamed for this numbness. So how do we account for public passivity in the face of the bruising toll of death and destruction that American military power has doled out to thousands of Iraqi civilians who never did America any palpable harm? This passivity has barely fluttered, even after it became obvious that the invasion of Iraq could be justified neither as revenge for September 11 nor as self-defense against weapons of mass destruction. So how can it be explained?

Civic quiescence may be temporary, of course. In time, antiwar effervescence, the growth of which Stone traces in his chapter on Vietnam, may emerge. Or it may not. The aging war party inside the Bush administration learned from Vietnam that the best way to "put to sleep" domestic opposition was to eliminate the draft and create an all-volunteer force equipped with high-tech weaponry. Their thinking seems to be: no political protest without draft resistance, and no draft resistance without a draft. This scheme for circumventing democratic accountability eventually produced the troop shortages that made it impossible for the United States to halt the looting and the wildcat violence that surged after the fall of Saddam. But it has also immunized President Bush, at least so far, from an anti-draft movement of the sort that tormented Lincoln, Wilson, and Nixon.

Another reason to doubt that the American public will soon awaken to the realities of Bush's war in Iraq also emerges from Stone's account. During the Vietnam War, the antiwar movement drew strength from the fear of nuclear annihilation triggered by the reckless and bellicose party in power. In the war on terror, by contrast, the fear that New York and other American cities could experience their own "Hiroshimas" tends to mute criticism of the government by a public hoping desperately to be saved from an invisible but grave and purportedly gathering threat.

VI.

SO HAS BUSH SIMPLY BEEN ACTing in the tradition of Lincoln, Wilson, and Roosevelt, predictably infringing civil liberties under the extraordinary conditions of war? To say so would amount to praising the current administration with faint damns, which hardly seems to be Stone's intention. How, then, can a historian of America's wartime excesses avoid normalizing the Bush presidency? To dissociate Bush's unconstitutional behavior from that of his illustrious predecessors, we might simply deny that the so-called war on terror should even be included in this book. After all, it is not a full-scale military confrontation in the sense of the Civil War, World War I, or World War II. But Stone wisely does not choose to draw the distinction this way. He knows that these are very urgent questions.

An alternative, more compatible with his approach, would be to accept that Bush is just as much a wartime president as Lincoln, Wilson, and Roosevelt, but then to scour the historical record in order to identify something unprecedented about Bush's "overreaction to perceived dangers," some cavalier treatment of the Constitution that sets him apart from his predecessors. Certainly the Iraq war seems like one of the worst (and least comprehensible) blunders in the history of American foreign policy. Saddam Hussein may have posed some sort of a threat to the United States, but the exact nature of this threat has never been coherently explained. He certainly did not pose the threat that the Bush administration said he did. The administration's war aims and its criteria of success remain hazy to this day. So the very strangeness of the Iraq war suggests that Bush is doing something never done before rather than simply following in illustrious footsteps.

The genuine novelty of Bush's behavior in "wartime," in fact, emerges directly from Stone's story. Neither the Iraq war nor the wider war on terror to which it allegedly belongs has involved any criminalization of dissent. True, dissenters inside the executive branch have been fired. If you speak truth to power, in this administration, you lose your security clearance. But there have been no sedition trials, unlike the earlier episodes studied by Stone. Why not? The absence of conscription is one reason. Without a draft, there will be no anti-draft movement; and without an anti-draft movement, an antiwar movement may of course exist, but it will be anemic and uncertain. Only presidents who have to deal with draft resistance are tempted to flout the First Amendment directly, repressing speech that urges draft resistance.

If Bush has behaved unconstitutionally, he has not behaved unconstitutionally in the manner of Lincoln or Wilson, or even in the manner of Roosevelt. True, hundreds of innocent American citizens have been caught up for a time in panicky counterterrorism investigations. And at least two American citizens, perhaps culpable of serious offenses, have been held incommunicado for almost two years without access to an attorney. But the most morally abhorrent acts of this administration have involved the mistreatment of foreign nationals outside the United States and cannot therefore be easily classified as violations of the Bill of Rights.

Lincoln, Wilson, and Roosevelt, whether justifiably or not, violated the constitutional rights of American citizens on American territory. Bush has done this too; but he has been much more active in violating the human rights of aliens abroad. Since he has asserted (in the Padilla case, for example) his authority to deny fundamental due process to American citizens, there is no reason to relax our vigilance on this front. But Bush so far has violated the Bill of Rights only episodically. Most of the abuses that he has condoned have involved non-Americans overseas, and, despite some complications and unsettled law in this area, the Bill of Rights, in its crucial aspects, has never applied to foreigners extra-territorially. The behavior of prison guards and interrogators at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo is sickening. The toll of death and destruction unloaded on Iraqi civilians who never did the United States any palpable harm is morally repugnant. But neither constitutes a clear-cut wartime violation of civil liberties in the ordinary sense.

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This is not to deny that, in its conduct of the so-called war on terror, the Bush administration has violated important and long-standing constitutional norms. At his most radical, Bush has claimed that Congress has no right whatsoever to interfere with the way he chooses to conduct his war on terror. This historically unprecedented inflation of the commander-in-chief's power is a radical assault on our constitutional system of checks and balances. It flies in the face of the text of the Constitution, which grants a series of concomitant war powers to Congress, including the power to define offenses against the law of nations. Brushing aside original intent and two hundred years of constitutional practice, Bush administration lawyers have audaciously and irresponsibly argued that Congress has no right to turn international-law prohibitions on torture and war crimes into enforceable federal law if the latter in any way restricts the president's total discretion to treat foreign captives overseas however he wishes. This overreaching is truly flagrant, even by the lax standards governing the wartime presidencies examined by Stone.

This deliberate dismantling of checks and balances, it could be argued, also infringes on civil liberties, at least indirectly. This is what Stone is getting at when he mentions "the Bush administration's obsession with secrecy." It has not criminalized dissent. But the administration has over-classified documents, restricted Freedom of Information Act access, hounded executive-branch leakers, and blacklisted nettlesome journalists. It has thereby eroded, to some extent, the freedom of information that gives freedom of speech its political bite. It has abridged the inalienable right of citizens to examine and to judge their government. Serious and across-the-board censorship has proved unnecessary for maintaining popular support despite a catastrophic foreign policy blunder. The absence of a draft seems once again to provide the key to this puzzling development, though we should not neglect the contribution to public confusion made by some powerful broadcast media in the hands of partisan supporters of the administration.

Even if the extraterritorial torture or inhumane treatment of detained foreign suspects does not involve any violation of the Bill of Rights as it has traditionally been understood, it does involve a spectacular challenge to Congress's constitutional authority. It also involves a violation of several international treaties ratified by the Senate. Bush has sinned more often against international human rights than against domestic civil liberties. That unfortunately is the deeper reason why political protests in the United States have remained relatively meek. No vocal domestic constituency is directly injured when the administration flouts the Geneva Conventions and other rules that have previously moderated American behavior overseas. True, the Supreme Court has now asserted jurisdiction over the Guantánamo detainees, but Bush may still succeed in his grab for total power over aliens abroad. It is therefore worth reminding ourselves that he has rashly claimed this new freedom from civilizing restraints in an age of globalization when the kith and kin of those individuals whom American forces humiliate, injure, and kill abroad now have a historically unprecedented capacity to target Americans anywhere in the world, including here at home.

VII.

IT IS SOMETIMES SAID THAT THE September 11 hijackers exploited our generous liberties in order to attack us. If this were true, we would have to become a less liberal society in order to become a better-defended one. But is the premise true?

Not necessarily. What if, to infiltrate the United States and to evade our defenses, the Al Qaeda terrorists took greater advantage of our complacencies than of our liberties: what remedies would such a diagnosis demand? Would weakening the constitutional system of checks and balances, for example, help the executive become more focused and less reckless? That is unlikely. Indeed, the administration's desire to circumvent traditional checks and balances patently weakened its capacity for critical thought and self-correction, preparing the way for its egregious decision to invade Iraq. To defend ourselves against our most dangerous enemies, we do not need unrestricted government. We need intelligent government. And no administration that shields itself compulsively from criticism has a prayer of being even sporadically intelligent.

Governments will always be less transparent in wartime than in peacetime, and justifiably so. The rights of citizens to pry into government secrets cannot possibly be as expansive in war as in peace. Still, emergency conditions do not suspend the laws of human fallibility. Wartime leaders, too, need some form of adversarial process to protect them from cognitive biases and false certainties. Excessive secrecy may breed disconnection from reality. Panic may spread inside the bunker, and illicit private interests may colonize public policy if decision-making is monopolized by a few like-minded individuals who never listen attentively to alternative points of view. One-party and single-branch government weakens incentives for decision-makers to acknowledge errors and make midstream readjustments. The consequences cannot possibly be favorable.

Stone's admirable history strongly suggests that, in practice, the United States does indeed have one constitution for peace and another for war. This is a disquieting revelation. It is disquieting for an often-cited reason: the high-priority manhunt for anti-American terrorists, which Bush has styled a "war," promises to endure so long as weapons of mass destruction remain available to crazed conspirators—that is, for the foreseeable future. As we have now discovered, a largely unchecked executive has a tendency to gallop off on wild-goose chases, paying little heed to opportunity costs, tying down our troops in the wrong places, and failing to husband the resources that we are undoubtedly going to need to defend ourselves in an increasingly dangerous world. True, in the war on terror, as in previous wars, domestic criticisms of the administration may sometimes give heart to the enemy. But allowing a small clique within the government to continue making momentous choices behind a veil of secrecy, on the basis of publicly unexamined evidence and oblivious to contrary views, will surely debilitate the country and abet the enemy even more.

The constitutional right of American citizens to examine their government has invariably faded in times of violent conflict. This is an ominous precedent because we are now embroiled in a potentially endless battle, whether or not it qualifies as a war. By chronicling the most serious historical deviations from our ordinary constitutional order, therefore, Geoffrey Stone's outstanding book alarms as much as it clarifies. As the current administration flouts the Constitution in genuinely groundbreaking ways, it is also exposing the rest of us to dangers hitherto unknown. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The Ends

In the spring of 1989, at dinner with some of the heroes of the democratic revolt in Eastern Europe, I was startled to hear Jacek Kuron, the leader of Solidarity who died last spring, declare with confidence that communism would disappear within six months. I suddenly feared for the magnificent man's judgment. I turned to Leszek Kolakowski, upon whose sagacity I have relied ever since I was a student in his seminar on Pascal many years ago, for an explanation of such an extreme of optimism, and he whispered to me: "There are circumstances in which you cannot accomplish anything unless you think that you can accomplish everything." He seemed to be suggesting that faith in the final triumph of good over evil is a necessary illusion, a psychological condition for historical action. I wondered how one could know which circumstances required such certainty and which did not. This is the sort of certainty, after all, that has often attended catastrophe. As it happened, the dissident's assurance was vindicated by history. But the vexation remains. Must idealists be utopians?

Utopianism is back. We are exhorted from all sides to believe in happy endings. Russell Jacoby has just written *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age*, a woozy and peculiarly unpolitical volume in which he demands that the old liberal anxiety about the consequences of the belief in the perfectibility of the human world be retired. He does not say exactly why, except that he wants his dream back. And for what ails America he recommends (I swear) the vaporizings of Gustav Landauer, the anarchist mystagogue and Jewish revolutionary who was murdered by a fascist mob in Munich in 1919. (So far Landauer has influenced American life quite differently in the person of his grandson, the exquisitely accommodationist Mike Nichols.) So the spoilers of America have nothing to fear from this utopian.

More significantly, Jeffrey Sachs is just publishing *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*. This is a serious book by a serious man. It is stained by a fascination with the famous ("none but the incomparable Bono has opened the eyes of millions of fans and citizens to the shared struggle for global equality and justice") and the powerful, by a Davos tone, and in places it reads like the memoirs of a pin-striped messiah; but about the quality of Sachs's mind, and about the urgency of his work, I have no doubt. The scope of the suffering that he describes is sickening. He demonstrates that we are living now in the golden age of inequality. He is especially stirring about the desperation of Africa. His appropriately concrete book contains many numbers that I am not competent to evaluate, and also many proposals that seem sensible and practicable, though often his analysis of global misery boils down to a quarrel with the Bush administration.

Where I cannot follow Sachs is in his sunniness about salvation. He is in earnest about "ending poverty in our time"—specifically, "by the year 2025." This is also the goal set in a report released last month by the United Nations Millennium Project, led by Sachs. "I reject the plaintive cries of the doomsayers," he writes in the book, "who say that ending poverty is impossible." But economic injustice does not have only economic causes. My Augustinian heart tells me that Sachs's understanding of policy is deeper than his understanding of experience. Is one a doomsayer for saying that poverty will not be ended even though it must be fought? About other evils Sachs is less utopian: He admits that terrorism and infectious diseases "cannot be eliminated entirely." But his defense of the Enlightenment—he is right: when one billion people live on less than $1 a day and 2.7 billion people live on less than $2 a day, two cheers for Condorcet!—is unfortunately too innocent of the shadows, too lacking in what used to be called, before the end of history, a tragic sense of life. (At the University of Chicago last week, Francis Fukuyama gave a lecture called "The End of History Fifteen Years Later.")

The end of poverty? I pray that Sachs is right. I know that Sachs is wrong. This knowledge is not a form of resignation. It does not absolve me, or my unbelievably rich country, of the duty to do what actually can be done. But if the characteristic hazard of realism is complicity with reality, then the characteristic hazard of idealism is indifference to reality. In our wildly materialist and screen-stupefied society, in which every hope and desire is commodified and the smartest thing to say about anything is to explain how it works, there is nothing more precious, or more embattled, than idealism; and not least for this reason, idealism must never be stupid. Eschatological fervor leads always, in all places, in all times, to eschatological disappointment. It is an iron law. And nothing sets progress back like the idea that soon progress will no longer be necessary.

But the greatest utopian of the day is the greatest conservative of the day. Nobody speaks of the transformation of the world more excitedly than George W. Bush. His fantasy is not the end of poverty, as is well known. His fantasy is the end of tyranny. "So it is the policy of the United States," he declared in his inaugural address, "to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." Why is the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, or in many nations and cultures, not sufficient? Why must we also be fools? (This is not quite as foolish, though, as the observation by a left-wing Darwinist, in a commentary on Bush's speech, that "nature is working toward [tyranny's] demise." Nature, not history. Nature, that realm of perfect justice.) A world without resistance to tyranny would not be a recognizably human world, but neither would a world without tyranny. The deliciousness of power is not a problem that bandwidths or elections or markets can once and for all solve. Or will human nature change in 2010, as a great writer said it changed in 1910? And it is not cynical or "realist" to insist that it is *never* the case, as Bush claimed, that "America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one." So may freedom spread, and may we help to spread it; but may we never disarm ourselves philosophically against a world in which it spreads slowly or fitfully or not at all. If liberalism means anything, it means the end of the ends.

LEON WIESELTIER

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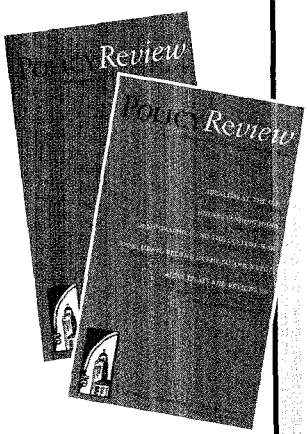

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Idealism at the U.N.

The high-level panel's high-minded errors

For a Burkean realist with any sense of institutional conservation, making the most of the United Nations is a useful project. Lots of capital, financial and otherwise, has been invested in the organization over the past 60 years. To the extent possible, humanity should profit from its investment. . . . . In any event, it is hard to fault an organization that recognizes the need to reform itself, especially one that has borne the hopes of humanity so heavily as has the United Nations. Sadly, however, the core recommendations of the panel's report, concerning the use of armed force, rest upon wishful thinking rather than empirical evidence. The report evinces a view of a world governed by objective, universal morality rather than by competition for power and shifting national interests. It treats substantive problems as language problems, suggesting that a new vocabulary will eliminate underlying differences. Historical context is either missing or incorrect. The report, in short, exhibits all the familiar shortcomings of old-style Platonic idealism, ignoring the real-world incentives and disincentives to which states actually respond.

—Michael J. Glennon

Understanding Jihad

An authentic Islamic tradition

Islamists share the conviction that they know how they must act to garner God's favor. One obligation, the neglected obligation that they assume, is *jihad,* war to impose *shari'ah,* first on their own societies and then on other societies. This obligation stems from an authentic tradition within Islam. They have not hijacked Islam; instead, they are working out their convictions, convictions with a history that reaches into Islam's formative years.

—Mark Gould

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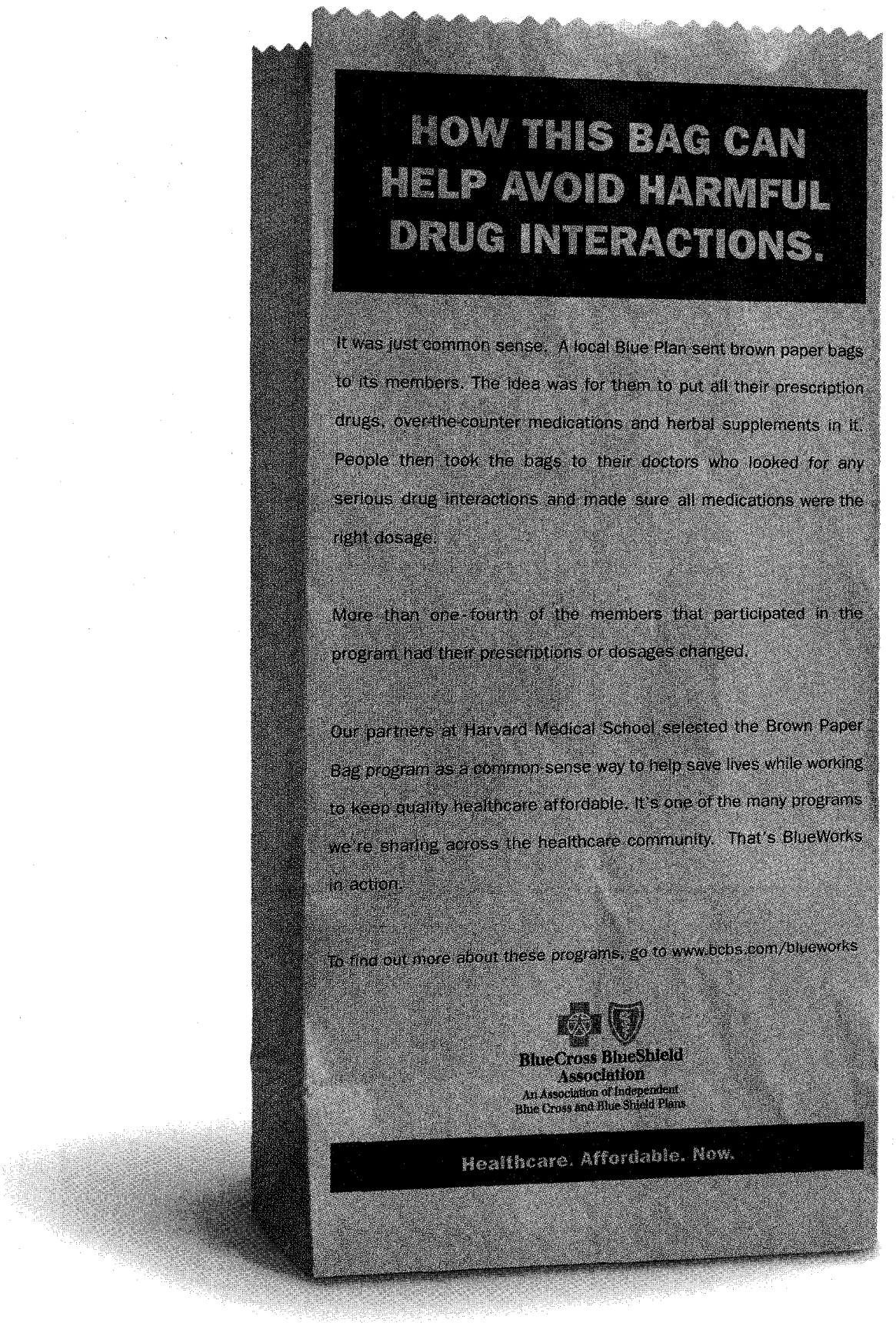
HOW THIS BAG CAN HELP AVOID HARMFUL DRUG INTERACTIONS.
It was just common sense. A local Blue Plan sent brown paper bags to its members. The idea was for them to put all their prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements in it. People then took the bags to their doctors who looked for any serious drug interactions and made sure all medications were the right dosage.
More than one-fourth of the members that participated in the program had their prescriptions or dosages changed.
Our partners at Harvard Medical School selected the Brown Paper Bag program as a common-sense way to help save lives while working to keep quality healthcare affordable. It's one of the many programs we're sharing across the healthcare community. That's BlueWorks in action.
To find out more about these programs, go to www.bcbs.com/blueworks
BlueCross BlueShield Association
An Association of Independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans
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